We have a choice. I believe everyone has a heart, and within every heart, there's a conscience. And I know the inner peace we are lacking in ourselves can be found. I know all burdens we carry can be lifted.

check out the rest of Bilitant's POW on page 6

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 12.08

Hey editorial note readers, you few are in for a treat. After reading this piece/ed note we hope you will then encourage your peers and even counselors who normally don't read the editorial note, let alone The Beat, to at least read what follows.

Several issues ago we featured within our editorial note the stellar writing of Baby A. Then the next week we featured Dwayne The Knowledge. And as promised we want to finish this Santa Clara County trilogy/showcase by featuring yet another amazing young man who was in the Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall at the same time as Baby A and Dwayne, and that's Dat Nguyen. What he speaks/writes is the truth. We never have ever seen a max unit as solid in any of the halls we visit as was his B8 unit during the last year of time he was housed in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. With that said, we hope you take Dat's knowledge and run with it!!

Yes indeed Dat still reads and stays in touch with The Beat. Here's Dat's contribution that was first featured in issue 7.39.

My Juvenile Hall Experience

It wasn't too long ago when I left Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. Matter of fact, it was only four and a half month ago. I was housed there for two years. I came in on my 16th birthday. Two years later, a week after my 18th birthday, I was sentenced to prison with an 18 year term.

A week after that, I was sent to San Quentin (reception center). To now, I'm currently being housed at High Desert State Prison. I came across this topic many times, and now I'm finally going to get a chance to put it down and share it with you.

On the night of my 16th birthday I was arrested for three counts of attempted murder, premeditated and gang related. I was booked in County (Jail) because I fell under the Proposition 21, that came out in January 2000. They housed me in Juvenile Hall due to my age.

My first nine months in the Hall was nothing but trouble. From the time I was facing, to the gang bullshhh I was into. Fight after fight, write-ups and problems with counselors and staff. I was a hard-headed boy.

My family was always there for me no matter what I put them through. But I didn't realize it then, and I wanted to ride.

There were good counselors in the unit at that time and they gave me good advice, but I didn't take it seriously enough. Part of it had to do with the time I was facing, and part of it had to do with me, well most of it. I just wasn't ready to let go of everything I did for the gang. I don't know why it didn't hit me then. I was mad because I took it for the gang and the boys, and then all these people told me just to forget about it and let all that gang b-s go. I wasn't ready, period.

I was facing triple life's for something I didn't do, and I am going to ride it out for the homies and now all of a sudden you tell me to stop!? Hell no! I wasn't going to change. My attitude was screw it. I was a young and ignorant teenager. I had troubles coming from everywhere, in court, in school, on the unit, and at home.

Nine months after I was booked, a new group of counselors were assigned to the max unit. They shut down the unit because of the gang related incidents that happened few days before shift change. I wasn't involved, because I was out playing handball in the courtyard, everyone was surprised. The new group of counselors were stricter and tighter, so I knew it was going to be hard to get over on them. They brought us out day after day to lecture us as a group, which bored me. Before that we hardly got lectured.

I was confused, confused with what to do with my life and my time at the moment. Even though I was confused, I knew I needed to get myself in shape, physically and mentally.

A few weeks after my seventeenth birthday, I took a plea bargain. The plea bargain was an 18 year prison term. It was a shock to me when they wanted to lock me up with more time than I ever lived. I just wanted it to be over with, all the court related matter. My family was worrying day and night, so I just want to get it over with.

I asked the judge to allow me to stay at the Hall to finish high school. He agreed. So time, after time, they prolonged my sentencing date. While waiting for court, I took advantage to all the chances I could get to helping me get my mind right and body in shape for the big house.

During the time I waited for court, I got to know all my favorite counselors better and it was the other way around too. I finally made up my mind to put it all behind me. I focused on improving myself, mentally and physically. I didn't want and tried to not let anyone hold me back. I tried not to depend on anyone, in a good and discipline way. I started to learn from my mistakes and others. I started to observe my surroundings and the people around me. I listen to the wise words that were told to us at morning and at night.

As I got to know some of the counselors, we had a good time. The whole unit did. That helped me a whole lot. I learned discipline from one, patience from another, and humor and health tips, etc... It goes on. They helped me and gave me countless advice. They assured me that I'd be okay wherever I will go. The unit had structure. Now to think of it, that year in max unit was the easiest time I done so far. The unit ran smoothly, from minors, teachers (some), counselors to the supervisors. Everybody's day went by fast.

On my high school graduation day, everyone showed up. My parents, teachers, even the supervisors and almost all the counselors. Some came to my graduation on their day off too. It surprised me to see so many people cared. I'll never forget that day. I was happy and I knew I did a lot of things right lately. Not to say that I never slipped, but I learn from it, and tried to use it as an example so I can avoid it in the long run. I was and still am learning

No good or bad time last forever. Every trip has it's end. So when I found out that a new group of counselors were coming into (the unit) replace the old, I was sad. Not that the new group were bad. But it was going to be different because some of these counselors had helped me so much. They were there with me, to help me when I needed or asked. They help me to a certain point where their job allowed them to. We had the best program in the Hall at the time, an easy but tight program. We were one of the two max units in the Hall after all.

Throughout the years, many counselors was surprised when they look at my files with all the I-R's (incident reports). A lot of people had asked me why I changed. I didn't change for any parent or anyone. I changed for myself. Of course seeing my family hurting didn't make me happy at all. But I guess it was time to grow up. I realized and understood for myself.

The whole time I was there (in the Hall) I didn't get no "hi" or "how are you" from my old friends. There were a few that wrote, but it was a few. Most were in the Hall with me this time and because of being there they know how it was. The one that were there with me throughout, and most of my time there, they understood me much better. I think because we were on the same boat, the boat that was heading for the Pen. We became tighter through the years, as we drop the street b-s. Sometimes it tripped the counselors out. Some of them know how we were on the streets. We put all that behind us because it didn't do us no good. It had gotten us here (in the Hall) in the first place. The one that couldn't become friends, we gave each other enough space to do our thing.

My time at the Hall was definitely a lifetime, learning experience. I learned so much. It's a shame that I had to go to jail to learn what I could of learn, if I simply listen to my father and all the people that tried to get it through my thick head. But it was good to learn, period, it was better than hide from it. Even though I dealt with a lot of court issues while I was there, but yet all the positive stuff made up for it, in one way or another.

A lot of counselors made it easier for me as they helped me to understand. It was on me also. Because before I can let anyone help me, I have to have the will power to help myself and wanting help.

Unfortunately, not every unit in the Hall is like the unit I was in. And not all the counselors there are the same as the ones I know. This is only my opinion and experience.

There are a lot of counselors out there that are devoted and want to make a difference. They want to help the youth straighten up and understand the big picture, not just the present. They are the ones that will treat all the minors the same, no matter what kind of charge we came in for, or what it says on our police report. That was what the group of counselors and some of the other ones did for me/us. We were lucky and I am forever grateful. They got to know us and they did not treat us like what we were labeled, as killer teens.

We should understand that their job is not to be our friends, their job is to feed us, clothe us, give us shower, give us shelter and make sure that we are safe. And some of them go out of their way and take time to help. Some of them were there one way or another, believe it or not. Of course there are always some that just wanted the job for the money and the benefits.

Remember, just don't treat people the way you don't want them to treat you: "Don't judge the book by it's cover." You don't have to be their friends or make them yours. You don't have to spill your guts to them and kiss ass. Just make sure there is an understanding between you and whoever you're dealing with. Just like any relationship. Understanding and respect are the keys. Remember "tough time won't last, tough people will."

Lastly, I want to thank all the counselors, teachers, supervisors and friends that had helped me over the years. You know who you are and you are appreciated.

Moving right along, here's this week's topics. First up, "What Do You Do When All Your Color Turns To Black And White?"-Has there ever been a time in your life where it seems like all your bright primary colors — the yellows and oranges and electric pinks — drain out of your life, and everything turns into a mixture of black and white, where everything turns gray? Did things in your life just get so complicated that everything that had color and life to it seemed to lose its color and life? For example, did you have that "perfect" relationship that went south, or lose someone in your family who gave your life meaning? What did you do to get that color back? If you haven't gotten it back, why is it so hard to get it back — and what are you doing to get it back?

Second topic, "If You Could Send A Beat To Anyone In The World" -The other day we received a letter from a man in Africa. We don't know how he got The Beat address, but if anyone in the world needed it, we think he did because he was going through more things then we could ever imagine.

That made us think that if your words can have an impact halfway around the world, who would you like to send a Beat to if you could send one to anyone anywhere in the world? Would you send it to someone you know overseas? To a family member who's incarcerated? To a long lost love you were trying to find? Or to the governor, a Senator, or the President? Why would you send it to this particular person, and what would you hope they would learn?

Lastly, "Long To Go" - Where have you not been, that you long to go? Consider the options, it could be anywhere in the world, to a family member you have never seen, but wish to connect with, or a family member/friend who moved away. What about school – high school and/or college? The military? What about a professional sporting event, or an on Broadway play? A boat, train or plane ride? How 'bout the beach, a walk across the bridge? Tell us this week of the place(s) you have never been, yet, but long to go. Break it down.

The POW (Pieces Of the Week) writers this week are Jezebel (writes two), Big Vic, Doug-e-fresh, God's Child, Dane, Lil' E, Lil' Snow Rabbit Meli, Birdman, all from the 150 Crew. From SF/YGC we have Gregory, Sergey, and Bilitant. Also we have Kayla from Santa Cruz, Michael from Arizona, and Lil' Shorty from Walden House. Props to you first class writers writing in style and respect. Thanks.

All right, it is time to call it a note. We think we couldn't pick a better ed note for such an issue. Don't hesitate to ask us for more pieces from Dat, Dwayne or Baby A, we have them in our archives. We'll being doing more features in future issues.

This issue goes out to our man Manen Pau, who single handedly lays out and designs The Beat Within each and every week. He is as solid and dependable as they come. We are so grateful for the friendship and the hard work he puts into creating two issues (big Beat and San Jose Beat) each week, and the time he takes with updating our website each week and all the other little request we throw at him during the work week.

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co–founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Allan Martinez

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Jill Wolfson, Joanna Lin, Allan Tinker, Patricia Johnson, Amanda Ables, Omar Turcios, Mervyn Wool, Dennis Morton, Sheerly Avni, Jennifer Clark, Roy Hodgson, Brittany Bernard, Brahmani, Houston, Hanif Bey, Perry Jones, Kathleen Large, Nick Jones, Will Roy, Zoe Torres, Keir Davidson, Belen Nanavarrie, Onsce Vilayngeun, Lupe Rodriquez, Sara Maloney, Siliva Mortenson, and Caitlin Urie.

The Maricopa County, Phoenix, Arizona, Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Joe Szulecewski, M.A., Lisa Donsker, M.C., Hillary Shluker, M.C., Lisa Karczewski, M.A. The detention staff are: Tammie Utter, Shannon Lechner, D. Scott Herrmann, Ph.D. Clinical Director.

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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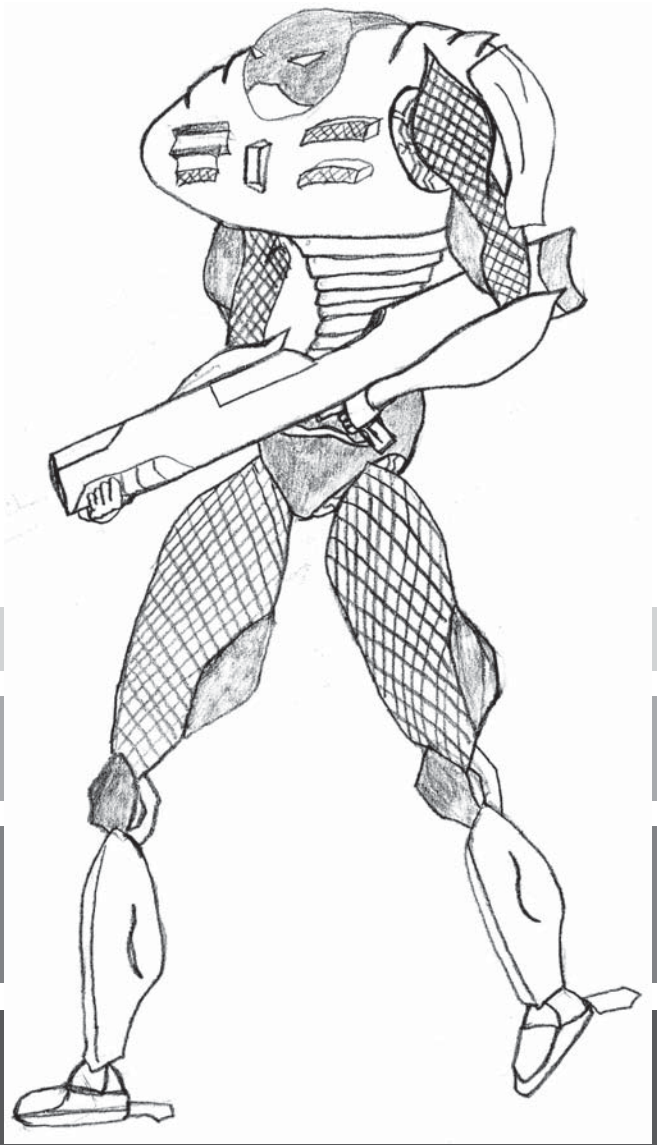


PIECES OF THE WEEK

My Life

All my life I've been rejected
All my life I've been neglected
All my life I've been disrespected
So I choose to fill my void with something that needs to be injected
People don't understand and most times I don't either,
I just feel scared and alone and I don't want to feel neither
I feel like I'm drowning in a tsunami of confusion
Praying it all is just a dream, just an illusion.
It's self-persecution, like a slow suicide
You can run but you can't hide
Sometimes I feel like I can't take it anymore
Growing up as a kid I never dreamed I'd be a whore
Then I keep hearing this voice inside my head
Saying you'll never be more and you're better off dead
And it hurts so bad thinking this is all that I'm good at
Thinking about the should have, could have, would have
Knowing that there's nothing I can do so what's the point in trying
Know that with each day I'm slowly dying
What's the point in crying
I'm tired of people always lying to me
why can't they see this is all I'll ever be
I wish that people would just leave me alone
I might not be technically grown
but what I've seen of the world I don't like what I've been shown
I just wish that mommy would come home
But she don't matter I'm gonna make it on my own
Too many words yet not enough to express
all the stress that lies deep inside of my chest
I can't think I can't rest I feel mentally compressed
I know life's a trade off but it's also a test
I know I should feel blessed,
That I've been given a chance to take it
But I know I'm gonna fail
So I'm just gonna fake 'till I make it
You can take my heart but you can't break it
You think that I trust you but don't' mistake it for something that it's not
What may have been forgiven will never be forgotten
aemember I say cold.
You say hot.

-Jezebel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece is so strong, so real, so incredibly well written. You're facing a lot of difficult emotions and a difficult situation, and yet somehow you were able to express yourself so that your reader can feel what you're going through and follow what you're saying. There are not many true writers in this world. We think you have real, raw talent. If you can keep writing, you should. Write everything that comes out of you, in poems, in prose, in fiction, in fact. Don't stop writing. Understandably, you have a negative perspective about the hand you've been dealt. Would you be willing to use some resources that help girls transition out of prostitution and into a safe living situation, a high school diploma, a job? If the answer is yes, would you have the courage to call a woman named Nola Brantley at Scotlan Youth and Family Center who help girls like you get out of your situation? If the answer is yes, you can call her at 510-290-6450 or you can call their hotline free at 1-888-4MISSSE.

The Night

In the night, the stars seem to guide me
but when evil comes, the night seems to hide me
I can't be judged by the way I appear
'cause at night, my outer-self disappears
all they got is the words I speak
my inner-self never is weak
an intellectual
being a person who's very smart
it's not me your seeing but the core of my heart
only if the judge could see me at night
then he would see I don't scare people with fright
but that I care,
a person with emotions
smooth with my words like some baby lotion
some might even say I'm Slick like Rick
but the name always Big Vic
they say with night comes the evil spirit
but I seen the good,
I also hear it.
Crickets and the owls seem so tranquil
have me in a zone
like I just popped a pill
at night is when I write the most,
guided by some spirit,
some ghost,
in my own world,
letting the pen go at night,
I don't need to put on a show

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Excellent writing. We wouldn't be surprised if a word/phrase or two is missing, and we apologize if so. Regardless, this piece speaks volumes regarding your joy for writing, especially at night. Is there a time when writing is not so joyous? We can't convey this enough, your writing has come such a long way. We go into many other juvenile halls and other units in this hall, and young writers always tell us that Big Vic is the one they look forward to most when it comes to reading pieces in The Beat Within. Why one might ask, well, we suspect because your honest, your thoughtful, and the reader can so easily relate and learn from your real insights.

Growing up as a kid I never dreamed I'd be a whore
Then I keep hearing this voice inside my head
Saying you'll never be more and you're better off dead
And it hurts so bad thinking this is all that I'm good at

5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... Space!

I have seen on TV what people do in space! Despite the dangers of traveling to and through outer space, I have seen them doing a lot of things that have made history!

Traveling to space would be something spectacular! I would like to float in the air, mess with hella gadgets, eat some weird-ash food — and just the adventure excites me! I would love to be a part of history, to be the first black man in space! I would make my family proud and my friends, too!

To travel to space, would open my eyes to a new dimension. Just thinking about it now, I can imagine what a beautiful sight it would be to look back at earth and out to the stars!

-Doug-e-fresh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, what a great ambition to hold — and bold! You're well-informed and no stranger to the danger, but you've seen the successes, too, of men and women who have gone out into space before you – making history, just as you say. Yeah, wouldn't that be a great day. An expansion of your physical, emotional and spiritual horizons, a new dimension, not to mention — a beautiful sight: Doug-e-fresh sailing across the sky at night like a shooting star in perpetual flight!

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Bring Back Next Time

When the world comes crashing down
And you feel alone
When there are people all around
All your hopes and dreams come crashing to the ground
You keep screaming but you don't make a sound
You keep trying to smile but you only frown
So you think to yourself, where the hell is god?
They say he'll never leave you or forsake you but then you think
He was never there in the first place
Isn't that odd
You keep asking for help
But the only voice you hear is from your mouth, no one else
So tell me where the hell is God?
So many tears I've shed, but how many more 'till I'm dead
My eyes have bled
Things won't ever change
Old things remain the same
Frying every brain cell and burning every membrane
No one will ever know all the pain I contain that slowly
Drives me to the point of being insane
Things we see yet never saw coming
How do we stand still yet we fill like were running
Away from ourselves when most time we began to cause are own pain
Constantly feeling everyone thinking were the ones to blame?
With no one to blame no lame excuse to use maybe it's a lack of understanding in this lifestyle that we choose
This is a story of a tale never told
Of how one survives in a world so cold
Not yet old, yet no quite young
I simply speak of a bird and a song once sung
See I was born into a family half corrupt and crazy
With a father who wasn't a father, rather a nut that made me
Sometimes I wonder where did I go wrong
Or maybe it was never quite right all along
Where the hell is God
I know this girl, she was only twelve, given the world with every chance to excel
But she hung with the boys and heard the stories they tell
She might act kind proud with no respect for herself
She never had a male role model since her daddy left her
Too bad, too bad he never told her she deserved much better
Who's to blame for the lives that tragedy claims
No one explains
Even if they did, nothing would change
The pain still remains
Where the hell is God in the time of need
The whole worlds consumed by greed
Addicted to money like a tweaker is to speed
It makes my eyes bleed.

-Jezebel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! Those are some powerful words written with great skill and intelligence. Another girl in your unit wrote this week about pain being a source for beauty. We think this applies in a case like yours. You have had a difficult life, you're angry, you feel alone, but you create this incredibly powerful and beautiful poetry. How difficult it will be to take the beauty you have created and let it seep into the dark areas until they are overcome by light. We think that you have a mind that is capable of taking you to new and less painful places. We think you have the wisdom to recognize the darkness of your life and confront it. Use your sharp mind to find a way out.

Help God

All my colors turn black and white in here.
What do I do? Turn to God!
Everything turns into a mixture of black and white.
Everything was going good, then I just come in here for some stuff I didn't do.
I feel like I'm in hell, I never been to jail before.
No one cares. I tried to say what I seen and they bound me.
This is a cold world. They can do as they feel. This ain't right.
Who can I turn to about this situation?
No one, because no one in America gives a shhh about this young black man.
Next time I know something about a situation I'm just gon' shut up.
I was doing good, but I just had to get what I knew off my chest and no one cares.

-God's Child, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have been writing really powerful, sad pieces these last few weeks, and the weight of your struggle hangs heavy. But we're so glad you ARE writing about it – that takes courage. A less strong person would avoid the subject entirely, but you are voicing your fears. The last thing we would ever ever want you to do is shut the anything up, because your voice is what you have. When you write, and people read you, then you are being heard by other human beings, you're getting a chance to tell YOUR side of the story, you're getting the pain you feel off your chest. When you pray, it's the same thing – you're reaching out to be heard by the God you believe in. These things show us that you haven't given up hope, and as long as you have hope in yourself, we have hope for you too. Keep the thousands of young people who read The Beat updated as you fight this case, and don't give up!

Longing For So Much

One thing I don't want to do is go to the army. The reason I don't want to go to the army is because I don't want my mom to be watching TV and see me laying on the ground dead.

One thing I would like to do again is walk the beach with my mom and talk about how I'm doing in school, and get to know each other better than we did before.

Another thing I always wanted was ride on the train to its final stop, and ride all the way back with my mom, dad, sister, and also my big brothers. I think that would be beautiful because I never got to spend time with my mom or anybody because they always say that they don't have time, they got to do something, or they either have to use the bathroom.

If I would be able to make up the rules, my number one rule will be all children have to walk the beach with their parents and get to learn about each other more than they already know about themselves, or... each other.

One last thing I would want to do is meet my two twin sisters Kiesha and Shavvet because, since I'm the baby of the family, I've never seen my grandfather or my grandmother. So I want to know what it's like to see someone in my family I never met before. BOY, THAT'S GOING TO FEEL SO GOOD!

-Gregory U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: And when we read this, it makes us feel so good, on so many levels! First, thank you for taking the time to write something meaningful, and not just put down three lines so you can get your Beat. But besides putting in the effort, which we appreciate, there is so much we like about this piece, from the easily achievable longings, like riding the train to the end of the line, to the far more serious longings, like walking the beach with your mother, meeting family you haven't met, and trying to know your grandparents even though you never met them. Your focus on family is so inspiring because it tells us that you already know what to treasure in life, and that puts you way ahead of so many people, both those locked up and those so-called free people. We're not sure we understand about your twin sisters... are they not with you? Did you get separated at some point? Why? What do you think it would be like to meet them? Do they have as much sweetness and insight as you reveal here? We hope you show this truly great piece of writing to your mother (even though she may not like reading that you felt she didn't have time for you too often). Not only does your love for her shine through, but she may not know what a treasure she has in you, and this may help her to see. When we read something in The Beat that's this good (it doesn't happen often), it is even harder for us to try to conjure up the circumstances that led you to be writing us from behind locked doors. Whatever happened to put you here, we hope you are doing what's necessary to prevent it from happening again. One thing we're glad that is not going to happen is you going off to war. Good for you!

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Things I've Enjoyed In The Past

Things I liked doing in the past that I haven't even thought about doing recently:
Riding my bike with my cousin
Playing some basketball
Just going places with my parents and family members
Going to Redwood City with my dad to that Malibu Grand Prix place to race little formula one cars.

It breaks my heart to remember that one great time that I had experienced around age 9 or 10 that I haven't even done once ever since. Recently I thought it was fun to hang out with my Russian homies, but after coming to Juvenile Hall, what I really want is to hang out with my dad. I almost feel guilty that I haven't came up to him and asked him if he wanted to go or not.

My dad and I live together, but have been mentally/emotionally separated for the past five years. Tears in my eyes, I pause. It seems as if it was I who might have delivered — if not verbally, but somehow telepathically to him — a message that he failed as a father.

I go to my room, cry, come back and end by saying to myself that when I get out tomorrow, many things in my life will change. I will make sure of it. I love you dad. Fishing with gramps...

Thank you "Beat" for giving me the opportunity to realize finally some important stuff about my life.

-Sergey U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's pieces like this one that make The Beat such a fulfilling and satisfying job. If The Beat helped you to realize what you already had in your life, then we're very proud. But to be honest, we think you are far more responsible for this epiphany (sudden understanding) than we are. Sometimes it takes a shock to make a person open his eyes and see the world for what it truly is, valuing the treasures that you have and recognizing the childish games that can cost you everything. We don't know what caused you to feel estranged from your father, but we do know that being a parent is both the most important and the hardest job in the world, and it seems that you see that too. We hope you never forget!

Pain I Endure

Pain I endure, please do no more
Let me be free and like a bird that soar
Pain like this I'm not even sure
If I want to live or die
And I don't know why
I shed no tears, even though I want to cry
All because I don't know where my life lies
Here or there, or maybe behind door number two
It all random, so you'll never know
My anger is very high and tolerance is low
I don't know why it's that way
I just wanna get up and fly far away
But I don't wanna leave my loved ones behind
But I'm also scared what I might find
Maybe it's the key to release my mind
I hope it is gonna be good, what I release
I truly hope it's not my inner beast
I learned one thing, the pain is me
I still ask myself, how can this be?
The pain is so bad, it 'cause me to throb
When I go to sleep at night, I think of Tamellia Cobb
Since her life been took
I been shook
I'm all mad for that, and pissed
This poem is over, but I love you, Sis

-Bilitant U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The pain you describe so well is the product of a conscience and a brain that is engaged and working. But some of your conclusions are premature. For example, we don't believe it's all random, though there is plenty of randomness in our lives. No, we think self-discipline, sacrifice and sticking to principles is within your power to achieve, greatly reducing the power of what is random luck. We also think part of your fear of what you might find inside yourself is a fear of the unknown that all of us share, but it is our experience that the fear is almost always greater than the reality, so we strongly encourage you to keep thinking, keep probing, keep wondering about yourself and the world — and the role you want to play in the world. You may have learned that pain is you, but what you have not yet learned is that you are so much more than pain, and that as your experiences grow and your mind expands, you will find that joy is also you, that love is also you, that wisdom and decency and goodness are all also you. Don't let the snapshot of your life today determine the course that your true life — a moving picture — will take tomorrow. Sometimes just asking the questions is even more important than finding the answers.

Love Yourself

This Bilitant out, still holding it down in San Francisco jail. What good to all the bras in Oakland jail? Today's topic is to love yourself.

In a world where evil lurks on every street corner and peace within one's self is a hard thing to come by, we must travel beyond mere existence and live a life the fullest, the best we can.

The street can make you and the street can break you, but don't let the street be the one to take you. The way you play the game is up to you.

To those caught in the trap of temporary pleasures, let me tell you this: the root of all evil, which is the love of money, and the next man's pain will surely come back to haunt you. We have a choice. I believe everyone has a heart, and within every heart, there's a conscience. And I know the inner peace we are lacking in ourselves can be found. I know all burdens we carry can be lifted.

Love yourselves and love each other. Give yourselves time to grow, and open your minds to education, 'cause it is the key to the way out. Whatever you do, make it worth something. All your consequences in life are dependent upon your behavior. If you know what the consequences are, why do you still exhibit detrimental behavior? To everybody locked up, stay solid.

-Bilitant U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Every word of advice and insight you give here could have been written as a "From The Beat" response. If everyone lived as you suggest here, there would be no need for juvenile halls, jails, YAs or prisons. What we want to know is how you got caught up, knowing as much as you do. Does this represent a change in your thinking, and if so, how did that change come about. Even more important, does this represent a change in your future behavior, and do you have a plan to go with this excellent set of principles?

A Feeling So Dark

A feeling so dark, so deep, so very insane.
A feeling so frightening yet so very welcome.
It's not about the bright fluffy things you feel when the sun is out.
It's not joy and contentedness that creates the most beautiful things.
It's in pain and hurt some of the most beautiful things come to be created.
It's in fear that we become brave.
It is in distress we grow.
It is anger we learn.
It is in the powerfully ugly emotions that truly moving things come about,
when I have been overwhelmed with such emotions.
In such dark, cold, lonely days, I had few outlets to turn to
with these things befalling my mind.
I turned to the drink at times. At others I would write for hours.
I would type out stories and lyrics so sickeningly sweet
I could not read them the next day.

-Dane, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your words are profound and true. Some of the most beautiful art, music, some of the most powerful social and political movements comes from great despair. Think of the Blues. Could the Blues have been the powerful music movement that it without the suffering that its creators endured. What will your Blues be?

PIECES OF THE WEEK

The Color In My Life

what happened was
i started with just a lil' function-ay
'till i got home and everything i had
was taken away
all the beauty and desire fo' life
is all plain pain
if i heard the word "baby"
it jus' wouldn't sound the same
all words is monotone
and i can't hear a thang
and now that you ain't here
i swear that it won't be the same
i think i'm color-blinded up in life
seein' nothin' but flames
and it's gray clouds of smoke
that make me think of yo' name
or even when i go to schoo'
principal's hit me wit' cases
the last time i seen yo' face
casket skin ain't the same
from the warm love that i felt
from the hugs and yo' hands
i love you mary catherine bailey
color lives on through yo' name
— my grandmother

-Lil' E(ric), 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, you take us deep into the pain of your grandmother's passing to another veil. Like that part about hearing the word "baby" never being the same from now on. And the flames that issue billowing, blinding smoke now reminds you of her name — and that casket image, oh mayne! You make us feel how the loss could drive you insane. Yet we urge you to maintain, and remember that her love will never die. Behind the clouds her spirit still looks down and sighs, seeing you locked up here inside the system. Her love wants to visit you in your dreams and make you listen to your grandmother's lessons in wisdom — slow your role! Despite your grief, you can heal your soul and bring your grandmother's spirit some relief. Make her proud that the one she loved so much on earth, is fighting to do right for all he's worth. That's success enough for a grandmother still in love with your grandson. Let her love become a blessing again and not a curse that brings you both more pain. Great poem! Now make your heart your grandmother's earthly home.

When It's My Time To Go

When it's my time to go, I want everyone who didn't believe in me to see how well I did. And I want my mom to finally realize that just because I didn't show her all the time how much I loved her, I really did. More than anything in the world, actually. When you sent me to my dad's, I realized how much I loved you and needed you.

I also want my dad to know how sorry I am for ever making him feel like I didn't love him. I had a good bond with you. You were like my best friend.

Steve, I'm happy that you gave it a shot at being someone in my life. I regret ever turning you away. My siblings – I love all of you more than anything. I love you Jared.

-Kayla, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Sad and beautiful Kayla. We can't say more than that because you've said it all. We wish you a long life full of happiness. We hope all your dreams come true.

Who Will Cry for the Little Boy?

Who will cry for the little boy?
Lost and all alone.
Who will cry for the little boy?
Abandoned with out his own.
Who will cry for the little boy?
He cried himself to sleep.
Who will cry for the little boy?
Who never knew his father.
Who will cry for the little boy?
The boy inside the man.
Who will cry for the little boy?
Who knows he'll hurt in pain.
Who will cry for the little boy?
Who died and died again.
Who will cry for the little boy?
A good boy he tried to be.
Who will cry for the little boy?
Who cries inside of me?

-Michael, Maricopa County, Arizona.

From The Beat: Although this poem made us sad, we admire your courage to face an issue that has been haunting you for sometime. How has this experience shaped the man you have become? Sometimes we have to trust that others, like your father, were doing the best they could at the time, just like we try to do our best. We sometime lose sight of this fact when there is suffering, and too much pain. You have an opportunity to do things differently with your own family, all you have to do is want to; you're stronger than you think Michael.

Letter To My Dad

If I could send a letter to anybody in the world I would seen it to my dad to ask him why he left me, why he couldn't stay, why didn't he stay until I made him cookies someday, why he wasn't a part of my life, why he wasn't there for my first kiss or my first dance, why he wasn't there to hold my hand in the dark cold world, I need you there, in my life. You didn't care. This shhh is making me so, so sad.

-Sad Child, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There is a place in you that may never be filled. Every child wants a mother and a father to care for them and love them and support them. The only thing you can take from that is a decision about the way you will one day raise your children. In the meantime, we hope that you won't let that empty place eat you up but instead you'll fill it with all the wonderful things you can scrape up to put in it. Maybe it's from that place that you will one day shine.

Missing My Daughter

I miss my daughter with all my heart
Now that we are so far apart
I think about her all the time
And it makes me feel
I wouldn't be a good mother
But in my heart I know
We will still have each other
I didn't get to say good-bye
But I made sure I went to church to lift her name up high
Also, I feel like I should've joined you in the sky
Now I know I will still have you deep inside
So God has came to end my shame in my game
And I feel like I am the one you should've blamed
RIP Aliyia Ridlisa Leshaye
Born: 6/27/06
Passed: 7/17/06

-Lil' Shorty, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: God not only wanted Aliyia with Him, and God has a different plan for you. Become the good mother you thought you couldn't be, and be the person we know you can be.

Who will cry for the little boy?

Who never knew his father.
Who will cry for the little boy?
The boy inside the man.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

What Kinds of Problems Did You Have on the Outs?

Part One: Well, I have all kinds of problems. It first started when I was seven. My mom popped into my life and that turned everything bad. I started having problems when I went to school and with my friends. Now that made it hard for me when I turned eight.

Then it started to get a little better, but when I turned ten, it started getting really bad. Well, let me tell why: My friends started getting in a lot of trouble — and they would blame it all on me! And I would take all the blame! Then the teacher would send me to the office, and I would sit there for hours being bored with nothin' to do. Then my grandma would come all the way down there to take me home.

Then when I turned twelve, it got real, real bad! My friends and I were up to no good. We stole from the store, broke car windows, went into some people's houses to take their money, etc. Then at the age of fourteen, I got expelled from school, because I was getting into so many fights that they couldn't even keep count of them, and also I was getting in trouble with the math teacher.

Then one day, I was throwing stuff at the kids just so they would get mad at me! Well, I called this girl's mother "a fat-ass son of a bitch" — and she got really mad and chased me all the way around the school. Then she finally cornered me, and I immediately put my hands over my head. So she started punching me. With one hit she broke her wrist but didn't even realize it until she calmed down.

When I was fifteen, things started to get better for about seven to nine months. Then after it started getting to the point that I couldn't take no more of these kids' pranks or their jokes about my family, one day I brought a pair of pliers to school and a screwdriver, and when any kid would mess with me or punk me or threaten me, I planned to clunk them in the face or bash them over the head with the pliers to make them leave me alone. But it never got to that point.

Then when me and my friend Rena was on our way to computer class, some kids were like, "What are you two little ninth graders doing?" — "We are on our way to computer class," I said, and Rena just stood there in fear. We just made it before the bell rang, and we got started with our assignment, which was to look up a famous person.

Now I'm sixteen, and things were still looking a little bad before I came to juvenile hall. I was in Starlight (a program for psychological therapy), and I had a lot of problems: Everyday something would happen, like fights, loss of a safety badge, etc. Then one day I was so mad I started an argument between Natasha, Brandi, Linda and myself. So we were arguing over a CD.

First I asked staff, "Can I use this for a coping skill?"

Staff said, "I got four people that want to use this CD but there's only one copy here.

Then Linda said, "I'm the one who gave the staff that CD. Not you, me!"

Then Natasha said, "No! The hell you are! You're saying you the one gave the staff that CD? Well, first of all, that the unit's CD, not yours, the unit's!"

I said, "I'm the one who asked to use it! Not you! Or you! I did! Man, I don't want that stupid CD anyway."

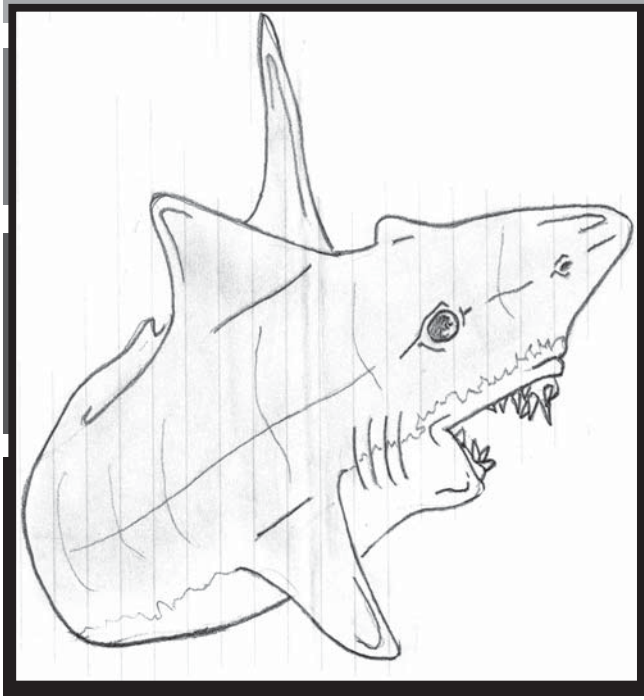
Then the staff was like, "No one can have the CD."

Next bad thing that happened then was my assaulting a cop, meaning, biting! Next ... sorry, too personal. So anyway now I've been here in juvenile hall since October sixteenth of last year 'cause now it's January thirtieth as I'm writing this. My court date is on March sixth, and I hope I can get a release!

Well, that's it for now. I'll see y'all next week. Please don't end up getting another charge or more time! Remember: Have faith and the Lord will be with you forever. See ya later alligator. (To be continued in next week's Beat.) The Beat Within forever!

-Lil' Snow Rabbit Meli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a story you tell! You've been through it and through it again. And whether you start it or someone else does, trouble just keeps dogging your days. Now you're sixteen though and ready to make some changes in yourself, like controlling your temper better. Hey, if you could just eliminate the trouble that you bring on yourself, that alone would be a great improvement. Then, we hope and pray that some of the trouble will just go away since you're no longer a little kid, 'cause too many big kids see "victim" written all over a little one whether they're out to get something or just have their own bad "fun". It's tough when your mother is not a role model but only a source of more trouble. What about your grandmother? Is she a good role model? You say she's the one who would come get you from school. How old is she? Is she in good health? Are you a support to her or mainly a burden, when you're at home we mean. In here she probably worries about you and misses you, but also knows you're safe 'cause you and your peers are so closely supervised in here. Well, thanks for an incredible piece that tells your story up close and personal (but not too personal)! We feel your heart and we know you can gain better control over your behavior. As for your peers, well, choose your friends wisely and walk away when you feel trouble on the way, coming from inside yourself or in that tough, cold world you have to live in again when you're released (not that there aren't tough, cold people in the hall, too). Still, the person who can make the biggest difference in your life and happiness — is you!



Everyday Without a Dad

Where I've never been before: I've never met my dad since I was born. He left me with nothing but a lousy father-figure to me. It's part of what had me making the wrong choices in life. I mean, I can't blame it all on him, but he' never been there for me when I needed him.

My dream is that I have a father-son relationship, but I only do have a mother-son relationship — everyday without a dad. It disappointed me. I want a father, to teach me how to be a man and a gentleman, like everyone else. My mom raised me in the hardest street you could ever live in, and I became street smart: I can snatch ladies like a flycatcher! I break ladies' cookies every time I see them.

-Dizzy Birdman, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great piece! That hole left in your heart will never be wholly healed 'cause no matter what happens from here on out, you grew up without a father. Maybe you'll still find a mentor/father figure to help guide you in life, or several different ones along your way. Take a look at the counselors who run this unit! On the other hand, you've reached an age where you need to start "fathering" yourself. You've had enough experience in life to know better than you did when you were younger. So give the power in your own mind to part of you that knows better, and give yourself the advice a loving father would give you — then follow that advice. Lastly, it may impress the youngsters around you in the hall, but it's definitely time to move on from your self-image as a ladies' man. It's a poor subsitute for the man's man you really want to become. And so long as your stroke your ego over it, you will not get serious about becoming the man you can be. Father yourself since you've had no one else to teach you what you can do and who you need to be to be happy, safe and free.

My Auntie Was Free-Basing While She Was Pregnant

It was July seventh, 2003, and I was hanging out with my auntie.

"Jordan, get my keys. I'm going to the store," she yelled to me from downstairs. She was free-basing. I grabbed my cousin, Jimmy. "Gimme my goddamn keys, boy."

I called my grandma. "Me and Jimmy are on our way. She hella high." I ran downstairs. She (my auntie) ran up on me. I threw her and ran out the house. Her boyfriend walked in the yard. He was high, too. I hit him. He dropped.

"Stupid (jerk), I'm gonna kill you." He reached in his sock, so I kicked him in the face. We ran to my grandma's. I dropped my cousin off and went back to the house, but they had left already. I later found out she had gotten into a car accident (she had hopped out of the car because she was hallucinating) and was hit by a car. She was pregnant, too.

-J, Marin

From The Beat: This story is straight up tragic, J. How is your auntie now? What's up with this boyfriend? We hope he is long gone, or totally recovered. If you get a chance to stay away from people who use drugs, do it. It will help you stay out of trouble and keep you away from using it. You've seen what it does to people, we hope you never try it. With that said, did your aunt have the baby? How is the baby today?

Cracked "Messed" Up My Life

I feel like crack made my life a living "mess" up
My mom and dad couldn't raise me because of it
A crack baby I am, but look at me now
Cool and funny, but not to be tested
Crack—I reject it!
I know a lot about crack
But I don't let it get to know me
I could cook it and sell it
But I won't let it sell me
Not to the system or the pen
Look at crack and look at me
There's no comparison
Look at me
know the smile on my face
And a future in my lens

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: Being a witness to what crack did to your family has given you strength to stay away from the drug, which we suppose is the best thing they could have done for you. We hope you continue to not let drugs destroy your life like it has destroyed the lives of others. How are your parents today? Are they recovered?

What I Want People To Know Before I Die

What I want people to know when it's my time to go is that I want to be cremated and put into the great lake in Michigan, where I scattered my mom's ashes. It was behind my grandma's house.

I want people to know that I was a loving and caring person, with an addiction to drugs. I want people to know that no matter how many mistakes I made that I will always love and care for myself.

No one can take that away from me. I want my dad to know that I loved him with all my heart. I want people to know that I fought my addiction and that you can get better if you work the program of NA & AA.

-Robin, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Robin, please keep working those programs. We know you are full of love. Don't give up. Tell us what you are doing to fight the addiction. How did you get yourself involved in drugs?

I want people to know that I fought my addiction and that you can get better if you work the program of NA and AA.

Why?

Times are crazy and it's time to take a stand! It's time to ask questions. It's time to take a stand before it is too late.

Let me start by asking about Hurricane Katrina. Why weren't the levees meant to hold (the water back during the hurricane)? I don't understand, because my boy lived by the levees and he told me he heard explosions!

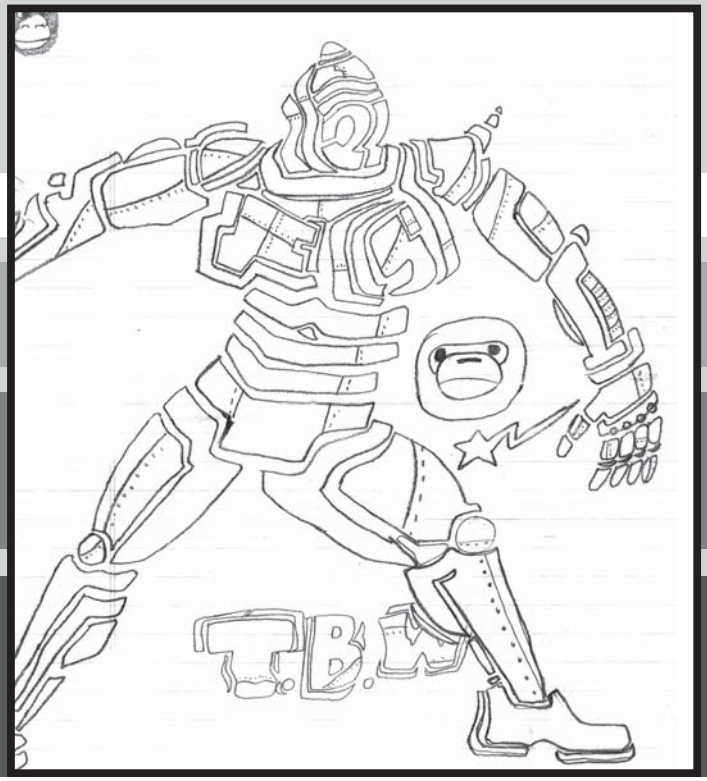
Next, 9/11. Why hasn't Osama bin Laden been found? Did you know the Twin Towers were meant to take up to three planes hitting them? More money was spent for the investigation of the Bill Clinton and the Monica Lewinski case than 9/11. Sounds funny, huh?

Why are they building camps in the US that are meant to imprison people but aren't prisons? Sound to me like concentration camps, the ones used by the Nazis in Germany.

Yes, people, we have been lied to, all of us. Who are the real terrorists? (Al Qaeda) or the US government? And if we don't speak out, then get ready to go through what the poor Jewish people went through during Hitler's World Order. Hitler and Bush are the same type of people. Fascists.

-Conspirator, Marin

From The Beat: You ask many deep questions that deserve answers. Unfortunately this life is corrupted and nowadays people are focusing in the things that they aren't worth it. If you had the power to make things differently, what would you do? From where would you start? And how can you bring peace and love to this world full of hate. You're questions deserves answer that we can't respond to. Do you those answers? Thank you for asking in The Beat.



CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

My Thoughts

Growing up as a kid I was broke as hell
got locked up and family couldn't even post bail
so I had to sit here and rot in my cell
wishing one day I might get mail
I might get good news,
I might get out
But that might turned to fright and I started to shout
I wasn't even eating not more,
I was in a drought that might and fright soon became doubt
Now I'm sitting here some three-hundred-plus days later
Havin' visions of takin' everyone out
As a kid, I was a good little boy
but then I had my stints where I demolished my toys
must have been a childhood thing
but no one paid attention
Days without a dime should I mention
but I don't need no pity
I'm the one who chose my course
Seems like I took the wrong path
fell right into the devil's wrath
my past doesn't reflect me today
I'm a whole different person that's here to stay
shhh went bad, so now I'm paying the price
thoughts runnin' wild like three blind mice
used to think my life was bad but look at me now,
sleepin' on this slab bein' broke is better than bein' in jail
'cause I'd rather be poor, then livin' in hell

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** No bail posting as a juvenile, but we know this is only a flow of sorts, and yes indeed coming to jail almost certainly means you are waiting and waiting on a letter, plus waiting to hear what the outcome will be on your case. We too will take being poor any day than having the county, the state take care of us from a jail cell. Forget that! Being poor is not easy, but having the desire and will to better your self is possible, and having a conscience that you can live with. Vic, you have a gift as a writer, that will benefit you when you make it to college. Plus, you are engaging and very likeable and with this you will find success. This all happens in time, patience! We hope you will forever remember this period as a humbling expereience, and also the spark to push you in the right direction, free of the system and successful! Teach on!*

Lost Princess

Two years and counting with my girl. My longest relationship, but I never took it seriously. Until now! I'm starting to feel like she the one. For the past two years I've been in and out of jail, and she's been there for me. Through thick and thin, she's been there. She deals with my baby mama drama. She even supports my mom and helps her out when I'm in jail.

But I'm starting to realize what I got a lil' bit too late. I've lied so many times to her, even cheated a few times, and now she cries telling me that girl come up to her and tell her that she's stupid for being with me. But she tells me that she doesn't believe any of it, that she knows I wouldn't do anything like that.

Now I feel guilty because I know what I've done. I wish I had a second chance so I could be the guy that she deserves. She's a true princess, but I know what I have to do now and that is to let go of someone beautiful inside and out that I don't deserve. Bye...

-Baby Duce U6, SF/YGC

***From The Beat:** You're right, Baby Duce, she does deserve someone who doesn't lie to her and treat her with such disrespect. We have some sympathy for you, because we know the terrible feeling of regret when we've done things that we can never take back, but only wish we had never done them in the first place. You are a good man for recognizing that you've treated her unfairly, and that she deserves better. We hope that this also makes you better, so that next time you can resist those easy temptations, the ones that make you feel good for a minute but which cause you pain forever. To quote one of our favorite poems, written 900 years ago (!) by the poet Omar Khayyám in Persia (now Iran): "The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,/ Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit/ Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,/ Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it."*

On The Edge

Ever since my ninja got hit, I been in the edge. I mean always been ready for whatever, but when I seen my ninja in that casket, the only thing on my mind was somebody gots to die. That was in '05, and to keep it real, I still feel the same way knowing somebody you love here one day and gone the next. So I keep heat.

I ain't trying to be put on a white T with the letters RIP. My mom's crying, my brother going to jail for wacking a ninja. I tell myself every day that ain't gone be me.

When I say on the edge, I mean if I feel you a threat to my life, better you than me. But don't get me wrong, I am a cool-ass ninja. I just lost too much to trust anybody. That's probably my biggest problem — trust.

I don't even trust some of my ninjas because nowadays cats is sneaky. I mean ninjas you've known since big wheels would piss on yo' back and tell you it's raining. That's why I only mess wit' a chosen few. But you'll never know until you're in the courtroom and that same ninja you was on big wheels with point you out and say, "That's him!" Because of shhh like that, I stay to myself. It took me 17 years to learn that!

-Marky D U6, SF/YGC

***From The Beat:** You say that when you saw your boy in that casket, your thought was (and still is), "Somebody's got to die." But somebody did die! And that somebody you cared for, and felt the pain of his loss. So all you can think of is inflicting the same pain on some other loved ones, those left behind in this stupid game of kill and kill and kill. How does this make things right? Will your pain suddenly disappear if you inflict the same pain on some other family? Marky, you say you're not trying to die, but do you think your partner was trying to die? Of course he wasn't. He loved life as much as you, but, like so many others, he is gone, and he will never return. There is only one life for each of us, and when it's over, we live only in the memory of those who were connected to us — and all of us are connected to someone who feels what you are feeling. Are the tears that your mother sheds different from the tears of any mother who has lost a child to this war on our streets? You are on the edge because that is where you have chosen to live your life, and the risk of living your life on the edge is early death, or enslavement, whether you're trying for those things or not. Far too many young people that we know only wake up to this reality when it is too late to do anything about it, when they are locked up for decades, or confined permanently to a wheelchair, and wishing... wishing that they had made changes while they still had time. If it took you 17 years to learn that even old homies can turn on you to save themselves, how much longer will it take you to learn that if you give them nothing to snitch about, you have nothing to worry about? Don't wait till time runs out, and you leave your mother weeping and in pain for the rest of her life.*

I seen how many kids didn't have much food and clothes. That reminds me of regretting the food I wasted.

Traveling Made Me Think

There is many places I would want to go. I ve been to Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. It was really fun and really sad. It was sad because I went to visit schools over in Thailand, and it was a very poor school. I seen how many kids didn't have much food and clothes. That reminds me of regretting the food I wasted.

Also in Thailand there was a very nice and beautiful waterfall. I wish when I get out and do the right thing that could go to many other countries like India, Paris (France), Egypt and Tokyo, Japan.

-Kwes U6, SF/YGC

***From The Beat:** We really like this piece, Kwes, because it might show others how travel outside this country can make you see things in an entirely new way. For example, you felt regret for wasting food here when you saw how hungry people are there. We can think of nothing as mind expanding as travel and seeing the world from many different points of view. How were you able to make these journeys? Can you describe what you experienced in Cambodia and Laos? What do you want to see in India and Egypt? We hope you get your wish — and we hope you know what you must do in order to make it come true.*

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

My Trip To Denver Will Change My Life

What's up Beat? Dis yo' boy B.J, and I'm going to tell you about my new life in Denver —a fresh new start in life with my brother A.J, a new environment, new places to go, and new people to see. My dad out there, but my brother and me are going to get a hotel because my dad is getting kicked out of his house.

This is my one chance to get on a fresh start and stay out of trouble, and I'm going to take that chance. I am going to show my PO that I can behave and act right when I get out. I have court 2/2/07. If I get out I will do what I need to do and wait until my brother get out of juvy.

Okay Beat, that is all that I have for now, so everybody that reads this please pray for me... Thanks! Also free my brother Aj.

-Bj U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That's what we're talking about, a piece of positive writing that fills in the details, that tries to answer the questions of "what" "where" "why" and "when." We definitely will pray for you, but it's your own prayers that you must follow and that will count the most. How will you live in a hotel? Where will you get the money for that? Do you plan to have your dad live with you, or just you and your brother? We hope that you have more than just a dream and a goal, but also a plan that you write down so you can follow it step by step. For example, "Enroll in school," "look for programs to assist me in housing, education, medical," "join a church or community social club," and more. Good luck!

Long To Go

Man, I want to go to da top. "Da top of what?" is what you thinking, huh? Well, shhh, I don't even know. I just wanna be on top, an' to do dat, I gotta step my game up. Not selling nothin', but da game in my life, which means I gotta own up to my shhh. Do what I said I was gon' do, feel me? 'Cause I didn't fulfill my words dat came out my mouth, so I gotta do dat.

I gotta get through dis hard shhh. It's gon' be hard, but I wanna be a kid again, be free with all da beezies. Not have to get locked in a room whenever da staff want to. I wanna get dis ova wit', so I could go to school an' get a job or two, so I could make dat gouda, an' can't no one take shhh away from me! 'Cause my game gon' to be up an' everything legit! An' I could tell whoeva da hell I want, " Forget you, I'm leavin'." Shhh, could you say dat when you in here? Hell na!

So make it so you could do ya shhh! I'ma do mine. Even if you got to do time, make it yo' last and leave dis shhh in yo' past!

-White Boy U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire your goals and your determination to reach them the right way. But we have to wonder about why you were not able to live up what you said you were going to do before you slipped this time. In other words, why do you think you can succeed now when you also thought you could succeed before, but didn't? The outside world will be just the same as before, so what will be different?

It's gon' be hard, but I wanna be a kid again, be free with all da beezies.

Why Me?

Why me?
I didn't even see it comin'
I didn't even hear the bullets hummin'
I shot my old ninja when I should've been runnin'
We was suppose to be ninjas until we hit heaven
Then you had to pull out the three-five-seven
Don't even trip 'cause I ain't mad
But remember one thing, I ain't glad
Still, to me it's RIP, Ant
When ninjas say am I glad I killed you, I say, "I can't"
'Cause you still my ninja no matter what went down
And I hate that I'm the reason you're not around
But you left me no choice when you went to the other side
I tried to talk it out tried to let it slide
But, like I said it's still all good
'Cause I remember when we ran through backyards in the 'hood

-Bilitant U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There is much to think about in this tragic poem of loss and remorse. One thing it proves is that the consequences we face in life don't all come through the criminal justice system. That system determined you bore no criminal responsibility for your act, but your own conscience doesn't let you rest easy, and that becomes a life-long consequence, one which we hope changes you, makes you truly understand the incomparable gift that every life truly is. But the other thing it tells us is that when you divide people into "us" and "them" ("the other side"), you can so easily convince yourself that you were left with "no choice." The truth is you always have a choice, Bilitant, and if you can't see that, then take a step back from that "no choice" point, and then another until you can see where — had you chosen to do something in a different way, walked a different path, chosen the "road not taken" — the outcome would have been different. The pain that so clearly haunts may not always overwhelm you, as it does now, but you will always regret how things turned out, because a precious life was lost, and lost forever. It's time now for you to undo the karma this event creates by putting positive accomplishments of love and sacrifice on the other side of the scale. Your heart and your mind assure us that you can do this, but only you can determine if you will do this.

My Life

My life is insane and also crazy
Days go by slow, they seem so lazy
But when drama around, everything fast
With so much drama in my life, I can't remember the past
But now the homicides are up, I wear a mask
I don't really know how long life last
But until the day I die, I'm goin' go hard
Continue to be me and pull a ninja beezy card
In jail so much, seem like I never free
All because it's against the law to be the real me
Crime is not good, but it like a habit
Money like a carrot and I'm the rabbit
When I see what I want, I got to have it
If someone don't want to give it to me, I'll grab it
But my life got good when I met her
She was so sexy, she gave my vision a blur
First it was all 'bout sex
That all I talked about, through phone text
She became something special when I came to jail
She showed love, loyalty and trust that would never fail
I love her to death, until the day I die
When it come to an end to us, to be side by side
This poem is over; I see you when I see ya
Just remember one thing, I love you, Martya

-Bilitant U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Who is "the real" you, the young man who wrote that he's addicted to crime and takes what he wants when he wants it, or the young man who wrote "the root of all evil, which is the love of money, and the next man's pain will surely come back to haunt you?" We think you're more than you give yourself credit for in this tight poem. If you think you're a rabbit grabbing those carrots, you'll end up more like a rat trying to grab cheese from a trap, and the important word here is "trap." Love is a great motivator, but despite the slogan, it doesn't conquer all. It is what you are inside, and what you want to be, that will determine "the real" you. It is not against the law to be "the real" you, but it is against the law to take things that don't belong to you just because you want them. We excuse that behavior in children because they don't yet know any better, and because children, by nature, see only the importance of themselves and their desires. It's very clear, however, that you are no longer a child, and therefore it's up to you to stop acting like a child and start acting like a responsible young man. Whether you take that huge step is up to "the real you."

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Holidays Shmolidaze, Praise God And Life Everyday!

For me, I don't believe in holidays I never have.

When I'm around people like my child's father and it's Christmas he will buy me something but I never get him anything. It's hard because I know as soon as I have my baby he's gonna wanna let him celebrate holidays and I'm not too sure about that. I really just wanna bring him up in the church like me and my family. Because I was the only one to really go wrong, I know he'll be just fine. But see when the dad tries to do other things it's really kind of hard to teach him. Maybe I will just let him celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas with his father's family and all the other ones he cannot celebrate.

I won't celebrate any of them with him but he will have the chance to go with his father's family to do so. I'm just going to tell him my family doesn't believe in holidays and that we don't have to have them every year. Now if you choose to go that's on you. I'm not going to stop you from that. I was just raised up like that and I think my mother did a damn good job. So if I could choose holiday themes it would be a real "God" day. Not a not-so-sure birthday, like Christmas, because no one was there with Him that far back. They even still have Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday incorrect in different articles and books. So I would say a day everyone prays, sits around and gives glory to the Lord Christ and gives to charities and homeless people on the streets.

The reason I don't celebrate holidays is because thanks shouldn't be given on just one day. Thanksgiving is thanking for food and family and life. Christmas, "God's b-day," and thanking for clothes and family - I do that on a daily basis so that's why I don't believe in holidays.

-Ariyca, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing your unique and beautiful perspective. We like the way you have proposed to raise your son, showing him your way, but being open to him learning other ways. This is very wise. Only when you try to control other people do they reject you. As far as giving to the poor and homeless on Christmas or another holiday, rather than to family and friends, is a wonderful idea. Can you imagine if all the money people spent at Christmas went instead to homeless people? We wouldn't have any homeless left! (However, we do think people need the opportunity to give gifts to people they love, if that's how they want to express themselves.)

I want to work hard in school and get a GED and hopefully go to college and play football and get a college degree

Goals to Accomplish

1) First of all I want to open my heart to Jesus. Everyday I pray and read the Book of Jesus and work on bettering myself.
2) I want to get out of here, not 'cause I want to go home but because I am a better man and I can do better than this.
3) I want to show my family and friends that I am not the same person that I was when I came here. I want to show this by goin' to school and not doin' the same things I was doin' before — and by forgivin' my enemies, because if God can forgive me then why can't I forgive them?
4) I want to work hard in school and get a GED and hopefully go to college and play football and get a college degree.
5) I want to start a family and have kids and be a good father by being there for my kids and helping them not to make the same mistakes that I made in life — and to not take anything for granted.

-Jesus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: These are some great goals. We like to suggest in your reading of the Gospel story of Jesus that you begin with Matthew Chapter Four, which will give you the Sermon on the Mount, including the beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer. This is really a summary of the instructions he left his followers on how to live their lives — and if you can live it, more power to you! It's all good. When it comes to forgiving enemies, it is a powerful practice: praying for them can help. However, recall Jesus' words of warning: "Be cunning as a serpent and innocent as a dove;" by which, he meant, don't make yourself a victim to the evil plans of others: remain vigilant. God bless. We wish you the best. Thanks for your inspiring piece.

Deserve This For a Day?

My name's Serina. I'm here in Alameda County serving my time, 'bout to get out on Feb. 2nd.... hopefully... but anyways out of respect, my honor I would celebrate my mother Christine, Rest In Peace, "the Fallen Angel had gone Home."

I never realized the struggles she had trying to give me and my lil' sis what we needed, and unfortunately I realize how good of a woman she was now that she's gone and I can't appreciate any of it.

Even with her severe diabetes she would try to make me happy and I would just push her away.

Now that I understand I'm going to continue to set my goals on going to college feeling her light presence with me I wanna honor that, the person I know watching over me. You should have a day of acknowledgment.

-Serina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is never too late to appreciate everything your mom did for you. She tried her hardest to give you and your sister the best. Now it's on you to honor her by doing the best that you can to be successful in life. That's the way she would have wanted it. Your heart is in the right place, good luck with everything and you have our support!

Trinity

through the telephone line
i can feel my should crying
from stroke to cancer
why is my heart a target
it all lies in pieces
why won't it stop
let me be free of misery
emotions flying high and low
outta control
make me wanna dig my own hole
these words make my whole world stop
my heart drops to the ground
as my hearing loses its sound
thoughts storming through my head
heart begins to pound
as i sit on my bed
bible in my lap palms together
praying for everything to be better
faith in three
the holy trinity
let a cure be set free
to enlighten the way
that troubles each day
within the power of miracles
above the power of man
let the light shine
along the spine
let it be pure
and cure
let it stand in faith
on land
let it become man
and touch the soul
and take control

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your lyrical talent can shine a light to guide you out of your own dark night. Yes, you have the power to express unbearable pain in a poetic refrain, but you too have the power to cry to heaven with a sincerity wherein beauty and desire marry as your message carries to the ears of God — or of the Son, since for trinitarians he's the one to plead your case. Meanwhile, we see the Holy Spirit in your face even in this dismal place, not merely keeping hope alive but burning bright with visionary shine! Stay this way and you're the man who will see that better plan in light of the knowledge that he can make it happen. Understand?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

My Life

I grown up in Oakland, CA.
Where killin', drug dealin', and mo'
Too much crime so white folk wasn't gon 'knock on the do'
When I was born I lost my dad
I had anger inside, but really was sad
Grew up with two sisters and a brother
No father just a mother
Watchin' all the things goin' on in the streets
Didn't have a father to show me the good way to act
By the age of nine years old,
Me and my older brother Weezy started sellin' D.
I was young money, boundin' on my feet
At 11 years old I started comin' to the Hall
Nobody never said jail, will be a part of life
When it's yo' turn to ball
In and out of jail from eleven to fourteen
I got sent to CYA for two years, me and my brother on parole now
September, 2006 we bounce back on the street, you can say "the hood"
Got a couple clips and had the hood on lock
I stop because I got a job,
My brother doing his thang sellin' them rocks.
Out for one and a half months and lost my closest brother
Eighteen years old, left my family in tears, really his father and my mother
I started back poppin' pills, bein' the old me
Had two kids on the way so I had to open my eyes and really see
Me and the squad started movin' mean.
I was young and had people ready to ride on my team
Now I'm facin' murder in the max
I should have listened to my family,
Brother, baby mama who opened up doors
This time I'm gonna make a change

-Papa F. Mykel Baby

From The Beat: Reading this poem made us feel as if we were living your life in fast forward, starting with a view of your hood and then all the way up through the pains and struggles (and triumphs) of your life. It's like you were giving us a tour of your past, with no tour bus but a pencil and paper instead. In a life full of pain though, the thing that stands out is your courage: On your own you decided to get a job and make a change, and then you fell off that path after tragedy ripped a loved one from you. As a father, as a young man coming up on adulthood, as a loving son and grieving brother, the question now is – is it too late to get back on the path that you know, in your heart, you have to follow. We want to hear more from you on this – both from you the person and you the poet!

Any Place

If I could be in any place in the world, it would be in God's arms.
I hunger to know what Jesus Christ thinks –
if I'm a terrible person or a good one.
I feel as if I'm trapped in a corner, with only my mother to love me.
I hear my mother's voice saying: you can do it my son,
I know you can.
I can feel scars inside me, laughing at my actions.
We're like fish in the ocean. Sooner or later, we're bound to get caught.
But only God can judge me.

-George, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We don't know what supernatural beings are thinking, but we like what your mother said to you. That's the kind of faith we humans need. Her belief in you comes from love. We're all scarred, but so what? What counts is what we do from this moment on. You're paying for your past behavior. You can't change that. But you have quite a bit of control over your present behavior. Do what you have to do to get your freedom back, and when you have it back, behave in a way that brings good things to you and those you love. Like your mom says: you can do it – we know you can do it. By the way – nice writing.

Two Letters

To My Mom and Dad

First to my mom and Dad. When you brought me into the world, you never thought that I would be bad. I know you had high dreams and hopes for me. When I was born you hoped for the best and all I gave you was stress and hurt and a lot of things that did not work. I'm sorry for the attitude. I'm sorry for disrespecting you by getting myself into gangs and getting locked up. Can you forgive me?

Love always, your son.

My lil' Brother and Sister.

I'm sorry for not being there for you when you needed me the most. I'm sorry for being mean to you and not taking me with you anywhere I go. You might not believe me, but the reason for not taking you with me is so you won't be like me. Also I'm sorry for not being a good role model to you.

Love always, your big bra.

-Fairlas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Fairlas, these letters are both full of love and real feeling and heart. But that's no surprise to us, you've been full of heart from day one. You've done some wrong, but maybe you should "you never thought I would be bad" from "be bad" to "do bad." You did bad, but bad isn't who you are. Who you are, or at least the side you've shown The Beat, in person and in writing, is someone with humor, hope, skills, and intelligence, someone who cares about doing right. In that sense, we hope your brother and sister DO end up being like you, because if you can start living like who you really are, you'll be the best role model possible. Good luck, remember to repeat all these words to your loved ones when you're face to face too.

Think

Today I want to make you think not about your mommy, but about life. Everybody thinks that they have it down -their lives – but they're just tripping.

For myself, the reason I am telling you this is because I see people walking around life not knowing what to do. That's most, not everybody.

But that's not what I want to talk to you about. Let me tell you one thing, you who are locked up, or if you want to be a gangster, or whatever the hell you think you are. You're not crap, porque!? When it comes down to time, real time, you cry. Weak hearts, that's what you are. You have to learn how to control your mind, before it gets the best of you, the weak side of you.

Thanks to God, I have not broken down yet. I know that I am going to do time, but I still don't cry.

You people who are getting out, you better get your crap together before it's too late. Even if it's late for you, you still can change your life, but not the situation that you've made.

-Uriel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good advice, about changing, while you still have the chance to do it. And Uriel, we know you are in a difficult situation. You are facing your adversity with courage. But we want to remind you that it's OK to cry. Sometimes a good cry can wash away tired old thoughts and make room for better ones.

Something On My Mind

Today is January 30th, 2007. I didn't feel like writing any topic The Beat came with. So I decided to write my own topic.

Well, I'm just hella depressed right now. It has been a day that all my homies got released. I'm the only one here now up in JJC U7. Last Friday I went to court. It was my disposition and I was really looking forward to be released.

But I don't know what happened... Now they're trying to send me to CYA. It's ridiculous because it's my first time. I don't deserve to go to the Y! Well I'm just hoping I could fight it off on my next court disposition. Hopefully I will be out. My birthday is coming up, too. So if this piece gets published and I'll find my self still sitting in the cell reading this, I will be really disappointed.

-Lonely U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're sorry you didn't get the release you hoped for, and we hope you don't get sent to the Y. By now, you should know what is going to happen. But whatever the court does, it is far more important to know what you are going to do. Whether you go to the Y or home, you will still be the most important ingredient in determining your future. So tell us what you hope for in your life, and how you plan to go from here to there.

Home Is The Answer

My experience in juvy taught me a lot. It brang me to realize all the blessing I had — a mother, a father, a family, a house, love, and I can keep going on. I usually end up in juvy for running away from home for answers, but I never received them.

I now realized that home was the answer. All the love I wanted was at home, I just didn't know it because I didn't want to believe it. But now I know it and I'ma keep it. I love my family and my home and I will keep it with me for da rest of my life.

-Egypt U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Now this is a realization worth being proud of don't you think? Too bad it took losing it to appreciate how good it feels to be at home where you belong. The one thing we worry about is how much stronger that love can feel when you're taken from it than when you are there and have to deal with real people who sometimes tell you things you don't want to hear, and sometimes fight with, etc. That is the reality of al relationships, whether with family members, lovers, or even good friends. In other words, loving relationships take work, but that work is very worthwhile. You are lucky to have a family that loves you and that you love. Treasure what you have.

To Heaven And Back

Somewhere I long to go is with my cousins in tha skies above, and be able to come back. I long to go there because I miss both of them very much, even though people say one of them deserved it 'cause he was a head busta, But I don't give a damn, 'cause he was a head busta defending his young ones and his life, himself.

My second cousin who died, he had a tumor that made him pass out and he fell out on his head putting him in a coma. In the hospital, his heart just stopped. I ain't even goin to lie, I broke down even though I know it ain't goin' to bring them back.

But I still long to go in tha skies for about five minutes just to get words of wisdom from them.

-Young Pbj U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We really like this sad tribute to your cousins who you loved. We understand what you mean when you say you don't care if one of them "deserved" it or not; you loved him and you are carrying the pain of his loss. This is the case for everyone who passes from this earth, whether they "deserved it" or not, whether they claimed one side or another. Every death is a permanent loss, and every death leaves loved ones like you shedding tears and feeling exactly what you are feeling. We also like the concept of going to heaven, but being able to return. It reminds us of a poem by the American poet Robert Frost called "Birches" which he wrote nearly 90 years ago. It's about remembering the things he loved to do as a child, but the lines that you're piece remind us of go like this: "I'd like to get away from earth awhile/And then come back to it and begin over./May no fate willfully misunderstand me/And half grant what I wish and snatch me away/Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:/I don't know where it's likely to go better."

Same Days Every Day

Every day I wake up and eat breakfast, the same food. Then I work in a crew. Crew is when the counselor picks a high step to clean the kitchen and the rack place. Then after crew is done, we go to school for six periods.

After school is shift change, and that's when we have new counselors. After that we have free time (rec) for a hour. After that is visiting. After visiting it can be shower and then dinner. After dinner it can be a program for a hour or two-hour rec. And that's the same thing every week.

-Kwes U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Your description of what it's like every day in the hall should make anyone reading it want to stay away. If you just had to live this for one day, it would be okay. But to live it every day, day in and day out, week after week, that would drive us crazy. What do you do to lessen the boredom? Do you like to read? What kind of books do you like? What kind of things do you do during rec that you can change from day to day?

What's It Gone Take?

Man, at this point in my life, I just want to give up. I understand that nothing I do would ever replace those long six months. But there is a thing called forgiveness. I guess it don't apply to me.

I get so tired of trying so hard to impress you, so that one day I would receive a "Congratulations!" or "I'm proud of you." But it's coo', 'cause I got someone else to impress, and that's me!

-Bam Bam, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: There you go, Bam Bam. Yes, it's hard trying to please someone you love who just won't accept your efforts. So you're focused on impressing the right person now — yourself!

Long To Get Away From The Streets

Man, to go somewhere where ain't no one at, drug free, me and da fam go to school, where I ain't got to make no fear. Me and you ain't got to rep yo' set, where the sun is always out, always having fun. Just me and my fam.

Make my mama proud of me where she ain't got to worry 'bout her baby boys no more, a place I call home.

-Dom U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Some of what you wish for can never be (the sun is never "always out" — there's rain in everyone's life sometimes). But most of what you wish for is what should be your right as an American and a human being — a place where you can live without fear and do the things that bring pride to your mother. We hope you find what you're looking for. You deserve it.

My City

I'm tired of all the bullshhh — court, probation, handcuffs, cells, county food. All these little things is crazy. I just wanna have a normal life. I want to go home and feel safe. I want to eat fat, sleep right, drink anything I want. I want all my privileges back. I'm homesick. I realize how precious life is.

As I sit here, I think about my family and regret that I am here. I just miss all the moments we had. When I get out, my motivation for not coming back will be my family.

-Bin Laden U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We know that everything you wrote here would be motivation enough for us to examine our lives and see what we had to change to make sure we never put ourselves under the control of strangers again. At the same time, we also know how much easier it is to make these promises to yourself when you're away from everything and everyone you love, and how much harder it is to keep those promises once you step back into the "real" world where we sometimes fight with those we love or have to say "No" to when tempted by friends. We know you can keep yourself out of places like this, but only if you remember that freedom is not paradise, and requires daily choices. Good luck!

Been Through

I've been through a lot, I've seen a lot of things not focused on the past, facing reality. I'm going to school I'm just tryna do my best, give her the life she always wanted for me. Yup, I got an angel who's watching over me it's my moms, she always right here next to me in everything I do she believes in me and I'm gonna give her the life she always wanted for me.

RIP Christine "The Truly Fallen Angel"

-Serina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Remember that just because something is past, doesn't mean it's not real. Sometimes you have to face your demons from the past in order to face the future and even the present.

Word Life Unspoken

Each day you come close enough to touch for me
yet the fear of fear of distance still remains.
What remains, what is life for those of us
who have ran out of words to speak.
We don't push, we don't pull
we only come close enough to remember us.

-Girly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Beautiful words, abstract, maybe for only you to understand...

Things That I'm Gonna Do

There are some things that I gotta do.
Like sleep, eat, and go to the bathroom.
But there are certain things I have to do as a man and as a kid.
Like I have to have friends.
I have to have money. And so on.
But the main point is that when I get out I'm gonna change
some things. Some good, some bad.
But I'm gonna change for the better.

-Alexander, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are describing the difference between survival and quality of life. No one wants to just survive. Everyone wants those extras: friends, family, home, food, entertainment, etc. The good news is you live in a country where achieving these goals is possible. The bad news is that you may have more to overcome than others in getting to them. In order to insure a good quality of life, you have to have money, and you have to get it the legal way or eventually you get caught and your quality of life nose dives into jail or prison. We think the best way to get where you want to be without the potential of losing it on one second, is getting a good solid education - and we don't mean just high school.

If I Could Send a Beat To Anyone In The World

If I could send a Beat to anyone in the world it would be to Armon Dante Green and Demedtrious Darnell Zigler. Armon a.ka. Meezy and Demedtrious a.k.a Meech two of my role models. I would send them because I really look up to them and I want to talk to them and tell them what's going on and how I feel right now.

Armon and Demedtrious (Meezy and Meech) are both in a better place. I just gotta look up into the sky and there they go. Meezy and Meech both were in this hall and I believe that both of them have done an article for The Beat Within, but those are the two people that I would send my article to.

To Meezy and Meech. Rest In Peace.

-Shady E, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, life is so unfair. It's hard for us to believe that our young writers and contributors can leave this earth at such a very young age, when they are still figuring things out, before they've had a chance to do or see much in life. We hope your brothers feel your love, even if they're not with us here.

Forget What?

I forget a lot of things
Things that are important and things that are not
Sometimes, even if it's about taken care of
I don't know why, but I forget.
Maybe because of all the marijuana in my brain cells
I don't know
Maybe because my lifestyle
I don't know
Maybe the things I do
I don't know
That's just me.

-Tere, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's just you to forget things all the time? There are exercises you can do to try to remember things that will help a lot. Choose a day or an event in the past and try to rebuild it as much as possible: who you were with, what they were saying, what they were wearing, where you were. Try to remember as many details as you can. You'll be surprised how much you remember. If you do this often, you'll strengthen your memory a lot and feel much smarter. And oh yeah, smoking marijuana does definitely affect your memory.

Dedicated To My Brotha' (R.I.P Christian F. Baby)

You have been gone for like three years now.
I'm going through life on my own.
'Bout to be 17 and you being here for me
is one of my most thought about dreams.
I miss you so much.
It ain't been the same.
But it's still squad click and you people still think we a gang.
I'm lightweight, settled down, still with wifey.
Oh yeah, you got a niece. She a solid three months old.
She act and remind me of me and you.
Still under and cool.
Uncle Dre died a week before you.
I still go to school and our family hella cool,
but I'm still gone go and do what I do.
You thought I forgot.
Gone but neva forgotten happy 20th to you.
R.I.P Christian F. Baby Lockhart.
Sunrise 1-31-87, Sunset 6-8-04.

-Lil' Solid, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's so hard to hear about our young writers losing loved ones, knowing it is nothing compared to the loss you must feel. The only thing for us to do is to ask if you think that pain and loss can be turned into something positive that would make your brother proud? Does his death allow positive changes to happen in the lives of the people he loved?

Crack World

Crack cocaine: Numerous grams in a zip, thirty-six zips in a key. I remember when D-boy (my bra) use to come to the house with a truckload of that shhh. The hood was the crack spot. It can be two o'clock in the morning and these ninjas be out their selling quarter-pounds like dimes.

Now my uncle (RIP) Felix Mitchell was the king pin in Oakland. He had seven different Bentleys for everyday of the week. So I can't say that crack was that bad, I mean I don't know how it is to be the smoker but as the seller it wasn't too bad. Fifty grand here, sixty grand there, it was lovely. Smokers happy, momma happy, I am happy, we all happy.

-That Ninja, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When there doesn't seem to be any opportunity, the school system sucks, the city don't care and it seems like no one really cares about what happens to you and your family and your community, it's hard to say no to that kind of money. We agree with you. But what if we told you you were getting played this whole time. What if we said, look, you can have your 50 or 60 grand and your Bentley for a little while, but then we gon' lock you up for the rest of yo' damn life?What would you say then? That's pretty much the deal right? You'll get locked up or killed (like your uncle) and that will be the end of the good life for you and your family. If you're going to build something, build it so they can't take it away from you. They can't take away an education.

My Baby Janae

Man, what's good Beat? This yo' Frisco boy Jalasko. But today I wanna write about my baby, Janae. She is the girl I been dating now for six months — wow! I mean, I know that ain't that long, but man, it feels like we been together for longer than that.

But yeah, man, I really love this girl. I may be young (seventeen, to be exact), but I really know what love is, and it's what I feel when I'm with her. She make' me feel like nothing else in the world matters — like when we together, it just feel' like the whole world stop'.

I think this might be my soul mate, and I'm thinking about spending the rest of my life with her. So, Beat, I might be inviting y'all to a wedding pretty soon! I hope y'all can make it. But before I do dat, I'm gon' try to finish school and get a job so I can support my family.

Man, I love my baby Janae so much, and I hope she feel' the same way. But hey, if she don't, then I guess it wasn't meant to be, and life goes on — but I don't want life to just go on without her "because we belong together", like the words in the Mariah Carey song say (ha ha).

Naw, but on some real stuff, I had fun writing for The Beat while I was incarcerated. And please make sure y'all put in this bold letter. I love you Janae Nicole!

-Jalasko, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad that you've enjoyed writing for The Beat. Don't stop writing after your release! It's more than just a way to pass the time. As this piece indicates, it's a way to express your deepest thoughts and feelings, and whether it's intended to show others or just for yourself, writing is an important tool in thinking through and maintaining some control over your life. Even if what you choose to write about is too private to show anyone, there can be a benefit from writing down your thoughts and burning the paper afterwards if you want. With that said, we wish you and Janae all the best. If it was, as you say, "meant to be" then love will pass all tests once you're free — so long as you don't make your money criminally!

My Name is....

My name is Hustle
My other name is the block
Some people call me slot
'Cause I keep shhh on lock
In the summer my name is Shining
When winter comes my name is Chill
when I go to heaven my name will be --Blessed.

-Slot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem is so simple, powerful, and elegant. We all have so many different sides to us, and we like the way you build up to the most beautiful of your side, the side that lives in a kind of grace. Especially since you start off with hustle. Today, your name is Poet and when you are ready, hopefully soon, your name will be Changed Man.

I Don't Know

Life is strange in crazy ways.
Live for minutes and it seem like days.
Try to be serious but time moves slow,
Start acting stupid and boy time go.
People ask me why I'm here—
And I don't know what to say,
Guess I just don't know when not to play.
So before you choose to play or act dumb,
nothing you do is worth a minute in here.

-JJ the Jet, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your drop weekly wisdom like a prophet of knowledge... so we wonder, when you get out, will you remember these wise words? Will you remember that you said nothing is worth a minute lockdown? Your time is precious, and as your constantly intelligent rhymes and insights have shown with every piece you wrote for The Beat, your mind is precious too. Remember that when you get out and the temptation to "play or act dumb" hits you again.

My Way Out

Well, my way out is to attend to my baby, go to school and go to church. I think that's the best way to avoid going or coming back to jail.

Another way of preventing going or coming to jail is getting a job or finding something to keep me occupied.

-Christina U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Every one of your suggestions to keep yourself free is a good one. Taken altogether, they are like a blueprint for success. What worries us, though, is how you allowed yourself to be taken from your baby to begin with. Didn't you think of any of this before you got here? Well, regardless, don't forget once you leave here!

Sentenced

He was sentenced to 9 years
And couldn't handle losin' the case.
Stood up and spit at the judge
Hit the DA in the face
They sat his black ass down
gave him 40 to the L
Can you sit four decades in a six by eight cell?
Loaded, stumblin' up the driveway
Didn't make it to the porch
Passed out on the front lawn with a sock full of coke
Woke up to a knock tryna peel whole bundle
Pulled up, displayed tha' fo'
All the fiend felt was thunda
Sneaky spida rip get a fly
Brotha caught in a web of shhh
Whisper to the feds about whatever's in ya' residence
And the evidence
On that goddamn camera phone
Ever since she had the digits, private number call the phone

-Chaz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We weren't sure when we were reading this flow if it was real-life or not, but it sure felt real... all the details of slipping into darkness and all the rage in the courtroom, and of course the question you build into it, which is like reaching out from the page we're reading and shaking us, hard: Can you sit four decades in a six by eight cell? But this feels like the forty minutes in a movie – you've got us hooked now, and we're dying to know how this story started, and, of course, how it ends. Peace.

Pain in My Heart

Thinkin' to myself, feelin' all this pain in my heart. I really don't know what caused it, but stress is what I gave my family to feel. I wish I can take all that back an' wish I wasn't here.

But I am. I ask God to forgive me an' all my bad sins, I ask God to not send me away for a long time, not seeing true love.

True Love never ails,
I'm stuck in jail
With no bail,
Livin' in hell,
Only time can tell.
The only thing I can do
Is talk to my family on a paper
And send it through mail,
Thinking to myself
Askin' what I did wrong.
Life is nothin' but many choices and open doors,
My heart is filled with bruises and sores.

-J-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We liked the way you set this up, part poem and part prayer. You say you don't know what you did wrong, and you say you don't know what it was that you did, but then you yourself close the poem with a brilliant insight 'Life is nothin' but many choices and open doors." So when you look back at the choices you've made, what were they, and have they helped you or hurt you? Like you, we believe that there are many open doors still waiting for you in life... will you walk through them? What choices will you make?

Tired of This Life Style

I'm tired of livin' this life style that I'm livin'. I'm tired of buckin' at rivals or gettin' bucked at myself. I'm done with the blunts and the drank and the pills. I'm done with feelin' hopeless most of the time.

I'm tired of gettin' money illegally, so I'm gonna take care of business and finish my schooling when I go to my group home — and get my real estate license so I can get my money the legal way.

But really, I would like to be there for my brothers and my sister, and set a good example. And I want to be there for my girl who's been through thick and thin. But most of all, I'm tired of being tired.

-J-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you're sick and tired of being sick and tired, you're ready to change — rearrange your life to avoid the strife and do more than merely survive, thrive: succeed legally! Yes, it will feel good to be a good role model for your younger siblings and to be a responsible man who understands what it really takes to stay free — to be there with your girl and share her world. You've got your mind right, now put in the good work and don't give up the fight.

College

Somewhere that I would really love to go is college. I want to go to college, but if I get sent to a placement, or a ranch, I know I won't be the same, and I won't follow my dream anymore.

I just wish that my probation officer, the judge and the DA could see that I'm not who they assume I am. But actions speak louder than words. So I guess it's really up to me to show everyone that I am really a good person. I'm like my father. I realized a while back that we both have really big hearts.

People like me don't belong in jail. I'm so stressed out about getting out and going home that I can't sleep at night. I just hope that God gives me one more chance.

All I care about is school, and my future. I'm on track to graduate this year, 2007. I'm then going to go to Cabrillo (Junior College) for two years, then transfer to San Jose State University. I want my degree to be in forensics. That's my goal in life.

Please, forgive me for my sins God.

-Student, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We're glad you want to get your degrees. Have you figured out why you did what you did to get yourself into this mess. Sometimes it takes a lot of work to figure that out out, to get to the roots of it. Have you done that?

What Does My Girl Want?

I'm really trying to figure just what my girl wants. We've been separated since the nineteenth of November, last year, and I miss her like nothing else!

The reason why we're separated is a long story in ancient history. Meanwhile, I'm trying to get her to see that we can overcome our problems and start fresh! But it's just something ab out her way now that has me wondering, "What does she want?"

I mean, we have a nice conversation one day, and then the next day the conversation is way darker. I just want her to know that I really do love her — and I want to know: What do I have to do to get her back? What does she want?

-Doug-e-fresh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maybe she wants to see you stay dedicated and strong, calm and patient as she carries on with presenting you with her doubts and fears. She wants you to prove to her that hard times won't drive you away from her and that easy words of the next girl won't lead you to betray your love for her. She wants you to prove that time is no obstacle to love, for true love will wait patiently, understanding the other's fears and anxieties will only disappear over time — the time you stay patient and understanding, far or near, proving that her doubts won't change your mind and that your love is for all time. Maybe — but that's why it's a test of faith: If you knew for sure, it would never prove your case: unconditional love for always.

Friday Afternoon

12:30 p.m. I just woke up and I'm in my Gray Dickies my RIP Davis shirt, I'm feeling hungry so I brush my teeth, make a bowl of rice and start grubbing.

1:00 p.m. everything seems so dull, my body and mind is not used to being sober, so I tell myself a lie "A forty-ounce of Mickey's won't hurt nobody"

I put on my Oakland A's jacket, a hat and slide into my black Chucks.

Foolishly without thinking about the consequences for my action, I packed my mother's twelve-inch butcher knife and start my walk to the nearest liquor store.

1:30 pm I just purchased a forty-ounce Mickey's. I started walking around aimlessly drinking my future away. Suddenly I stop in my tracks to a squishy sound, but I ignored it. And took another stop forward and almost slipped. I looked down and discovered I stepped in dog shhh. I put my forty down and went to a random house and hosed it off them and laughed at myself. (To be continued)

-Nguyen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, Nguyen, this was a terrific set-up. You really worked it the way professional storytellers do, breaking down the smallest details of your day and also giving us that very bad omen with stepping, literally, into a world of merde (That's French for – well, you guessed it.) We almost wanted to make the title, "Timeline to Hell," because that's where this piece feels like it's taking us ... but then we decided that like your own life, we can't guess the future, only you can tell us what comes next, so we'll pick To Be Continued. And now, CONTINUE!

We Lost Our Adolescence

We all lost something in this world: Our adolescence.
The situation that I am in got me stressing to the point where I just wanna give up.
Every night I wish I can just go back in time where I was an adolescent,
where nothing made sense and I didn't have a care in the world.
No worries about money, girls, guns and schools.
And back then everything seemed colorful, bright, and with a pinch of life.

-Nguyen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: These are wise words, and yeah you are dealing with a situation that's just crazy...this isn't what the teen years are supposed to be at all. But then, we know from other things you've written that you faced stresses as a small child that no child should have to face, especially all that violence at home from your dad before he left. Maybe it's not just a question of getting back your adolescence, but getting back your childhood too?

My Crappy Court Date

Well, I went to court. It sucked. If feels like my attorney is on the DA's side. She said I'm a ward of the court. Instead of having to go to placement / rehab for six months, I have to go for from one to two and a half years. And if I run, which I usually do, I would have to go to CYA.

I can't believe my life has come to this. I remember I thought I'd never have to go to placement or the hall, yet I've been in four different placements and locked up ten times. I wish I'd just done my first placement, or done good at home, because now I don't get another chance. I have to be away from everyone I know and care about for a long time. I'm just gonna do it and try to get out so I can be with my man, and friends.

-Shay, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We understand that line in the middle of your piece: I can't believe my life has come to this. But it has, and the question now is this: what will you do about it? CYA doesn't sound like a good option. On the other hand, a lot of honesty and hard work, both of which will be required at rehab, sounds like just what you need to turn the corner. You are obviously smart. Time to put those brains to good work, wouldn't you say.

No Title

Hey Beat, this Chuckie. Before I start on this linia's . I would like to extend my love and respect to all doing their time in these halls, and y'all know who y'all is.

Well by that said, today's topics wasn't even good enough for this pencil to
be wasting I'ts lead. I had this poem, I wrote like a week ago and I would like for it to get in The Beat Within.

I'm sitting here, thinking about my life,
Thinking about my family,
Thinking about all the things that began to happen
How I'm sititin' in this room, writin' and rappin'
I just wanna drink a beer to ease the pain.
But at the end it's all them same.
I was born with no name. But now I'm
Known, with lots of fame.
My mind is as solid as a rock,
Thinking about
My childhood past, I never knew my dad
But no matter what I'm still glad.
Nothing nice, but nothing bad
Screw a benz and screw a rollie,
Life is what you make it homie.
And like I said homie,
My mind is as solid as a rock
And I just keep on thinking about my childhood past
And how I wish I could have made it last,
but that's the past, I got to move on with my stressful days
I'm thinkin' about how I can keep control.
Should I take a chance like dice roll.
I stay thinkin' about the day how every thing went down
Should I have walked straight or gave all the way around. Thinkin' and
Thinkin' more like reminisce about my life right now that I keep missin' ,
I try to sleep but all I see is heading towards a prison
I ain't trippin' cause it's up to my decision.
I'm out stay calm do your
Time, don't let your time do you.
One love to all.

-Chuckie, 150 Crew

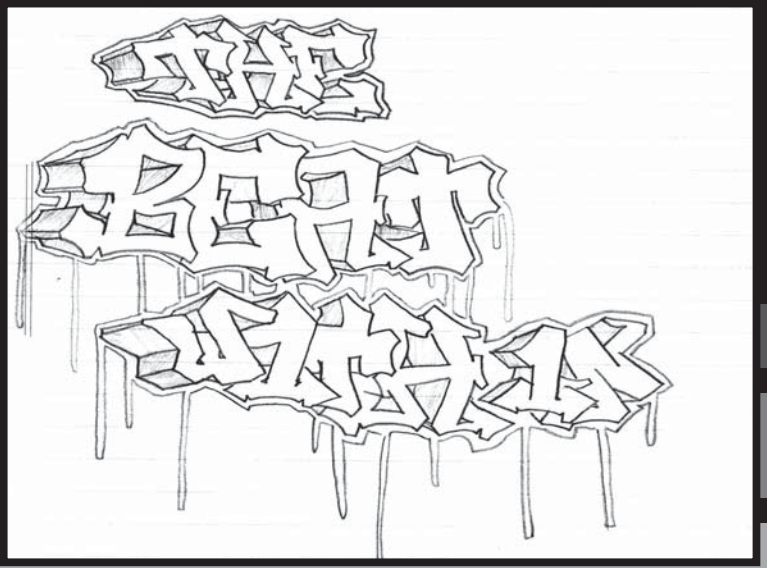
From The Beat: This whole poem really sticks with you, but the line that sticks out the most for us is "Nothing good, but nothing bad." It's like because of everything you've been through, you're almost settling for less than you deserve. You deserve a life with less bad and more good, you deserve a life of freedom, the love of your family, a family of your own to love... When you think back on your past, and plan for your future, do you aim high enough, or just accept that "it is what it is?" Keep the poems coming, we know you have the answers inside you, in heartbeats and rhymes. (Lastly, an OUCH on that topic dis – OK, if you're not feeling our topics, you gotta step up and write one for us. We'll bring it into the next topic meeting and let our editors see what you've got – remember The Beat is your publication and when you flip through these pages there are plenty of standout writers who step up writing on the topics!)

My Broken Wings

i'm on the edge of insanity
anger ravages my soul with it's energy
the nights in my room are getting colder
while the walls of my room are getting closer
i dream of kicking down these walls
releasing myself from this place called the hall
heaven's gates won't open up for me
and with these broken wings i'm fallen
i scream for freedom but oh so long i have been callin'
the nights in my room are getting colder
while the walls of my room are getting closer
i messed up and i messed up bad
i know it's my fault so i can't get mad
now i can no longer spread my wings
lonely in my cell — this is why the caged bird sings

-Lucky Loi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes you can get mad, at your old self who didn't understand where the path he followed led. You thought you were soaring on wings when you were really destroying everything you loved. But the gates of heaven up above will still open to anyone who sees his mistakes and truly repents. To repent means both to feel remorse for what you've done and make amendments to everyone you hurt — if it's both possible and safe; otherwise let direct amends wait and make indirect amends by changing your state of mind and becoming a blessing not a curse to your own kind. Broken wings heal if you practice compassion in how you deal with others and yourself — store you fortune in heaven where no one can steal your wealth. 'Cause that old life style is a death style hazardous to all human health, yours as well as that of everyone else.



Long To Go

I long to go to a beautiful island where the sand is very white and the water is clear. This is where I long to go. I long to go to a beautiful island where I don't have to worry about my problems. No stress, no worries. I long to go.

-Precious Love, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Don't we all! The good news is that's it might seem like a fantasy, but going to a tropical island is possible with determination and hard work. People do it all the time. But we suspect you are speaking of a metaphorical island of no worries. This is a more difficult place to find. We would like to suggest that merging the real and the metaphorical can help bring you to the place you want. Physically taking yourself out of the environment which is stressful can be the first step to that island paradise. Most of the people you know find it difficult to imagine being anywhere else from where they are. They have never been anywhere else and they can't think beyond the borders of their world. Once you start think beyond those borders, moving beyond them becomes possible. If you can't imagine it, how are you gonna do it?

Dear Mr. President

If I could send a Beat to anyone in the world, I would send one to the president, so he could feel what I feel while I'm in here, or he could have a piece of my mind. I would be very specific about what I talk about.

I would tell him half of the people in jail are people who can change if we had the right schools with the proper teachers, and they give the schools money like they give the schools in Montclair. I think if we really tried to get something done, I think the district would look into some of that stuff.

-Rj, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We wish the president could hear this too, because you've just analyzed an important part of what needs to change in this country – the distribution of money for public schools. It's ironic: As a young detainee in a troubled crime district, you're supposed to be "part of the problem." But yet here you are, proposing solutions. Maybe that's in your destiny, to take your skills and ideas and vision of what the world needs and become a teacher or an activist for change. Of course before you can save the world, you need to save yourself. And so tell The Beat how you're going to do that? The world needs more people who feel like you – not languishing in jail cells but fighting for justice. Are you going to be one of those people?

Black And White

When I get locked up I see everything in black and white, and when I get out, the colors come back. This is my fifth time here and I'm going to be locked up for a long time.

I feel like a piece of crap because I'm not going to see colors. All I see in here is black and white.

When I get out, I'm going to try to stay out. I don't want to come back here. I hate this place, so when I get out, I'm going to stay out. That's what I said all the other times I was here, but this time I mean it. I get tired of this place – people telling me what to do all the time. I'm tired of that stuff. That's why I'm going to stop doing all the things I used to do. Alrato.

-A new me, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: The proof is in the pudding, they say. Which means: the future is what you make of it, which means, talk without action is usually meaningless. We hope you're not 'just talking'.

Hey Beat, Them Ups and Downs

The topic today is about going through ups and downs. Yeah we've all been there. Boyfriend trouble (down) lead me to drugs (up) which lead me to so many problems (way down). But that was a long time ago. Why dwell in the past right? Right anyway...

I'm back in the hall for my third time now, this time for a warrant. It was weird, so weird though because I had been talking 'bout running from my group home for hecka long and then one day after school I just left. It seem like I walked the train tracks for hecka long until I finally found the town. It was on a Wednesday too. Who awols on a Wednesday? I stayed with someone I met at school. I had fun though. And I think I get to go back to the same group home, so I haven't decided if I regret running yet. I mean I know it was wrong and I messed stuff up for myself, so I guess it wasn't worth it. But why regret shit if you cant do nothing about the past.

-Ney, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's true, we all have ups and downs. But sometimes decisions we make can prolong the up or the down. Do you tend to make decisions that keep you up or down?

To Bang or Not to Bang

What's up Beat Within, this is Cheeno. Well I was sitting in my unit and my homie had an interesting comment about dropping out of the gang.

He thinks it's a cowardly thing to quit gangbanging but I think differently.

I think it takes a lot of strength and bravery to do that. Because dropping out of your gang is as dangerous as it is hard. It's dangerous because you get jumped and other times you can even get killed. It's hard because it's like if you're abandoning your family that had your back for anything and that rolled with you no matter what.

So I think it's a brave thing to drop out of your gang. Me, I don't plan to leave my homies any time soon, so thanks for giving me an opportunity to express myself.

-Cheeno, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you know people who have dropped out, and do they still have your respect? Also, if it's true that a person can get killed for leaving (and we ARE NOT talking about informants or people who turn information over, just people who decide to quit being involved in dangerous or illegal activities, or putting themselves in wrong place wrong time situations), then it sounds like in some ways, gang life can be a prison too...if people care about you, if they're like family, then wouldn't they want you to have a good life for yourself, to grow and stay alive and out of prison? We really want your thoughts on this... you stepped up with your answer to this question, and now we're asking you to keep going. Illuminate the mystery for us.

I Was Born....

"I was born on a day when God was sick..." because I knew He needed another hero, a hero who has a prayer for the hungry. And a spot, too, for the laughter of the wind blowing away the shadows.

-Nick, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We know you're getting released soon. And we're happy for you. You are beginning to get good at this poetry business. We will miss your work. Remember, you can send your work to The Beat Without, if you'd like.

Cherish Your Freedom

Freedom is a very powerful thing. A lot of people don't cherish their freedom until they don't have it for a while.

I didn't think twice about my freedom until I was robbed of it! I really took it from myself though when I got caught slippin'. I've always been the type of person that wants to do what he wants to do when he wants to do it — and it put me here!

Bein' in the hall is the weakest thing in the world! I got somebody tellin' me when I can use the bathroom, when and what to eat, when I can talk, and when I go to sleep. The only choice I get to make on my own, is whether I listen to staff or not. If I don't listen, then things just get worse.

So, basically, I'm just trying to get out to be wit' my family and my girl — and appreciate my freedon on the outs! I'm out.

-Young J, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So now you know that freedom doesn't really mean to do what you want to do when you want to do it — or certainly not at all times. Those moments when you do get that sort of freedom have to be earned by doing what you need to do when you need to do it. Of course, you also need to educate your heart to want things are good for you, 'cause up till now you've wanted to stay on that self-destructive path that took all your freedom from you but mental — and if you stay caught up in reacting against authority, refusing to listen to staff say, you don't even have mental freedom really, 'cause you're trapped in a pattern of self-destructive reactionary behavior. To appreciate your freedom and make it last, you need to accept more responsibility than you were willing to in the past.

I Love You Because...

I love you because I love you,
because you're you.
I love you because you're so kind.
I love you because you're beautiful.
I love you because I love me.

-Jackie, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: What a great last line. Completely unexpected.

Thankful of Life

Sittin' here so cold and lonely.
Wishin' I had my girl to hold me.
Not knowin' when I'll be able to go home
Tryna get it straight and think with my dome
Dreamin' every night of the thoughts on my head
Sometimes I have ones that I see myself dead.
When I wake up I'm always sweatin' and breathing heavy.
And sometimes I feel like I fell in a levee
I hate this life that I'm livin'
But I'm grateful that it was given.

-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And we hate the circumstances that brought you into our pages, but we're grateful for the heart and strength of your weekly writings. We know that heart will carry you through the next troubles, and we hope you keep contributing to The Beat Without. In truth we hope you would step up bigger than you have! You have so much to offer the young readers right now, but we suppose when you are ready you will.

Love Stands Tall

Love is pain and pain is love
Mykel and Papa love is together like two lovers.
Rise on the East also set in the West
We together are love and the world's best
Mykel and Papa's love stands tall
Stands up high so it will never fall
Water can never fade this feelin'
This is what I'm sayin, this is what the Lord givin'
Look into the eyes of joy
This feeling of love will never become a toy
So close your eyes and think deep
It's still alive when you asleep

-Lil' Papa F. Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "It's still alive when you asleep." If we only had a dollar for every great rhyme you've got in this week's Beat! Even though you and your girl are separated, this is a reminder of how words can bring people together even when they're divided by locked doors.

Three Questions From The Beat, Three Answers From Me

1.What do You do When All Your Colors Turn to Black and White:

I think when all the colors go to black and white that means that something is wrong. But the colors in my life go down I just think 'bout my mom and how she wants me to do right in school.

2.If You Could Send The Beat To Anyone in the World

I would send The Beat my best friend Jose because he is 16 and has a baby and don't know what to do. The Beat has helped me a lot so I think he can use some help.

3. Long to Go

I would not mind to go to Mexico to see my homeboy Jose because he's moved from Texas and went back to Mexico, and I was hella mad when he left.

-Brandon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: All three of your answers open the door to a whole world inside you that you could write a whole ten-page piece about. This left us wanting to know more about the richness of your world: The affection you feel for your friend in Mexico, and also the troubles you've had in your life as well as the love of your mother. If you have a copy of your friend's address in Mexico, by the way, we'll be happy to send him a copy of this week's Beat! And we'd be honored if he wanted to write for The Beat, as well.

Worst Thing Other Than Death

When I started coming' to jail last year, my life started gettin' complicated — because it's the worst thing that can happen to you other than death!

That's when colors started changing to shades of gray in my life. I don't mean the colors of my clothes changed. No, it's like a big, dark hole inside of me opened up and swallowed the rest of me, and it makes me feel so lonely, so depressed, so worried and so hurt!

Now I feel like I don't even exist, like no one ever cared about me or ever loved me.

-County Food, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh, that deep, dark hole of depression that bleeds the colors out of everything, leaving you cut off from feeling anything but ... well, just as you say. The thing to try to hold onto is that however overwhelming it feels, it's still just a feeling and it will pass. When it does, the world will look and feel different. You won't feel so totally alone. You'll remember and get in touch with the love you have had in your life, however unstable or temporary, and you'll create love in your life, starting with loving yourself and sharing that sense of well-being with others who will love you for it! Hang tough.

My Last Month

This last month is going by so slow. So many things have been going on in my life — that I'm getting scared to leave: My boyfriend got killed, and I took two strikes for him! I have gained a lot of weight. I'm eighteen and don't really have nothing accomplished.

Of course, it's easy for me to go out and sell drugs again — but this time, I want more for myself. It's even harder to do good when everyone thinks you're going to fail. But I know I will show everybody that they were wrong about me!

-Aleshia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We believe in you! We know how easy it would be to go back to selling drugs, and we know how hard it will be to "do good" — but we believe you have the character, the determination, certainly the intelligence and the heart, to make your life right. And next time you fall in love with a guy, make sure he's not the criminal type; so you don't ever need to serve anyone else's time again — 'cause the game will just do you both in. Stay strong! It won't be long now till you're out!

Fathers and Sons

Man, some ninjaz without fathers wish they knew who they father is. But I know my father and it's sad that I know him, grew up around him, nothing like him, want to fight him, 'cause he's never satisfied with my achievements.

But from now on I'm through with my dad, he don't even communicate with his dad, my big brother don't like my dad, which is also his. My father don't even go see his grandson which is my brother's son, and that's sad. But when my child is born he wouldn't even see him or her. Whatever it came as, I really don't care about his punk ass and the relationship between him and me is so sad.

Peace out Dad!

-Carver, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You speak with real raw honesty about the conflicts with your father.. it's almost like there's two feelings here: The rage and bitter anger over the things your father has done wrong, and also, like you say, sadness that your father can't (or won't?) be a part of your lives. How did this all come about? Does your father live with you? Did he used to be kinder to you and your brother? When you first started getting in trouble, did he try and help you? We hope you and your father find a way to make peace...in the meantime, we're ready to listen if you're ready to tell us more about the war.

Ms. Taylor. She is the best person to talk to when you really need a person to talk to.

Dear Everybody

I would like to thank Ms. Taylor more than anybody in this whole facility, because she has done so much to help me! I'm so thankful. She reminds me of my Auntie Gladys, who died June 8, 2006. My auntie's death makes me feel so sad yet thankful at the same time, because I know that she's now in a peaceful place.

Anyway, back to Ms. Taylor. She is the best person to talk to when you really need a person to talk to. You know what I think about her? She is the hero that touched my heart and sent my feelings to a place where they will never go back to the way it used to be. I'm so thankful the angels sent me a person I can trust with all my problems: Ms. Taylor, the angel!

-Lil' Snow Rabbit Meli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are counselors in here who can touch your heart, teach your mind and change your life if you will only feel them with your heart, think about what they say, and put the wisdom they share with you into daily practice. Thank you for singling out Ms. Taylor, an archangel in the choirs of heaven, as seen through the eyes of Lil' Snow Rabbit Meli. And thank you Ms. Taylor. We don't get the chance often enough to thank the counselors who invite us in once a week to work with "their kids" — who need all the angels they can get!

Beat Interview With Yadira

B: You okay?
Y: Yes.
B: What's up? You look like something's not right. Sad or something. Bad news from your PO?
Y: No, I went to court with some girls, and they let us out on EM (electric monitor), and my mom's phone been clear — but the other girls left, and I haven't left.
B: Because you can't get ahold of your mom? Do you know where she is?
Y: I mean, the EM people haven't come to get me to go home.
B: When are they coming? And why is your mom's phone out?
Y: I don't know when they're coming. That's why I'm depressed.
B: When you do get out, what comes next in your life?
Y: Have my baby and take care of it. And go to school.
B: If it's a boy, what will you name him and why? And if it's a girl, what will you name her and why? And, finally, when is the baby due?
Y: If it's a boy, I'm going to put his name down as Martin, because that's the daddy's name. And if it's a girl, I'm going put her name down as Yadira, because that's my name. And yes, I'm still with the daddy, but he is in jail right now and is going to do three-to-four years. So he won't be there when the baby is born, but they told me that it is due on the thirty-first of July.

-Yadira, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a great interview! We trust as you're reading it now, Yadira, you've been out for some time. Be safe. Remember every decision you make now is not just being made for you but for your baby, too! Expecting to get released soon but not knowing when, and then seeing everyone else leave before you, can be very disheartening, but it's just a temporary thing. Try to keep your spirits up when you're on the outs, 'cause EM can be trying, too. Don't let "the time" get to you — 'cause get through this little bit of time, so you, your baby and in a few years your baby's daddy, can have the rest of your lives together! Keep the big picture in mind, and just do the next right thing every time. That's how dreams come true.

Pimpin' Camp

I'm writin' to The Beat 'bout pimpin camp; fast
Every day a step closer to a home pass
A day closer to the house and everythang else
Add another day past this stress I felt
Then what it takes to get to the house
And whatever else to be diggin' a spouse
My daughter needs me out there so camp, i'm pimpin'
No violatin' so drank I ain't sippin'
'And a whip on four's is what I wanna be in
I holla at you next time, Beat Within

- Lil' Richmond, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You knocked us flat with this lil' rhyme/From a young father doin' his time/Getting' through camp and all his HP's/One man the system won't bring to his knees/Now once you get out and back to the street/How you going to make ends meet?/When the devils come back with their promises and deals/You gotta think back on how lockdown feels/And stay true to your words, your poem and your verse/So you can break these chains and lift the curse!

Want To Be Free?

Everybody wants to be free! Right? Well, actually that's not true, because some people don't want to be free. They like to be locked up from the world — to stay out of fights. They just feel safer in here.

Remember though, don't give up on life! Have faith and let the Lord help you with some of your issues and problems. Man! You'll feel better! Remember to pray every night — and mean it from your heart.

-Lil' Snow Rabbit Meli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What you write in your first paragraph is sad but true. However, even if they are safer in juvenile hall, will they be safer in jail, the Y or the pen'? So, yes, you're right, it is crucial to work out your issues in life so a juvenile detainee can learn to feel and be safer in the free world. Pray as if it all depends on God and act as if it all depends on you.

Bam!

i'm james bond in my tuxedo
weed is green as an avocado
gunfire makes me stumble
like lightning, hope cracks to grumble
got no gun, just my knife
bam — a bullet ends my life

-Keith the One, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In the movies James Bond never dies, but a different actor spits his lines. A gun or a knife protects no one's life in reality, or else why the ones who carry guns become fatalities. What goes down comes around. Give peace a try before you really die or end up serving life in a SHU — get a simple, little job for pay and stay in school or get your GED. That's the road to living happy, safe and free! But thanks for the fine example of tragic poetry.

Her Name

her name
her words
her lies
her twisted eyes
replay again and again
inside my mind
    i showed her my soul
    she ran from it
    i gave her everything
    she spat upon it
    i wanted joy for her
    she wanted a cell for me
her name was sam
a year ago we met
she had everything
i wanted
i craved
i needed
    her hate grew
    a sick love bloomed
    i want to cry
    i want to die
    i want to leave us behind
    yet this cell
    belongs to you

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sick love is like a bad dream, for when you awaken, you still scream, still shake and sweat, unable to clear it from your head. Your eyes start and stare into the blackness of your empty cell, as if what once was there in your mind's eye still might dwell in the darkness outside yourself to erupt with such force it courses through your heaving chest, stopping fast your deepest breath. And then your mind and heart are eased, as you simply breathe, breathe, breathe (to quote your own poetry to be published in a future Beat).

We Could Have Been In Juvy A Long Time

Me and the homies, we got a break from the police one day when we was walkin' on the golf course in Mill Valley. There were a bunch of kids who was drunk and we be takin' their money, cell phones, and then the police came and stopped us.

They said that, "We got a complaint about some Black kids robbin' cell phones," and we said we didn't do it. We hid the cell phones and the money, and they didn't search us and they let us go.

I learned that robbery isn't the way to go, because we could have been in juvenile hall for a long time for that.

-D Money, Marin

From The Beat: Even though you got a big break from the police that day, what else did you learn from that incident? You still have those kids' cash and cell phones. How can you spend some money, and use a cell phone that isn't yours? Did you give it back? No. It seems like you didn't learn your lesson because of your current situation. You were lucky that day, but not this time. What else do you need to learn or experience to stay out of this place?

Your Stories Make Me Feel Your Pain

I remember when you were tellin' me about the girl you fell in love with and how you think you'll never fall in love again, and how she died, 'cause of your gang and the streets. Then you sang that song about her. When I was listening to you say this, I was looking in your eyes. I could see all your pain and hurt.

When you tell me about your life and all the shhh you've gone through, I always see so much pain in your eyes. Your stories are so deep and painful; you make me feel your pain. Your stories make me wanna cry. I almost wish I could take your pain away for you, 'cause, even though I barely know you, I care about you so much. Don't ask me why, 'cause I don't know why.

You told me about your one-year-old daughter and how, when you see her, you feel happier than anything.

Something about you, I don't know what it is, but I just feel so comfortable around you, like I feel like I can talk to you about anything. I trust you almost more than anything, even though I just met you a few months ago. This shhh is comin' from the heart. Well, you know who you is. Much love. I'm out.

-Baby G, Marin

From The Beat: You have a tender heart, just like the guy you write about has. And you seem like you're also an amazing listener. You also have written beautifully for The Beat about what your family and you have gone through. Does this guy you've written about enjoy listening to your stories, too? We bet you could benefit from a friend who likes to hear about you.

To My Grandmother With Love (RIP Oral Lee Johnson)

My grandmother was always there for me — not a day in my life she was not there! I was fourteen years old when she passed away. I'm so hurt!

I'm still hurting, to this day, but I know she is in a better place. I know she is looking down on me saying, "You're still my little grandson who was such a sweet, intelligent little boy, and you still make me proud. Yes, you do!"

I cry. I cry and I cry. Why she' the one I'm talking to right now up in heaven — my grandmother, Ora Lee Johnson! I will be there soon. Love, Jermaine.

-Jermaine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: She doesn't want you up in heaven soon. She wants to guide your from heaven, so you can bring a little heaven down here to earth by living a life that is worth more than some fast cash from a hidden stash that will just get you caught up at last. She feels your love but wants to see you do a good program and go free, and then she wants to see you do what's right so you never have to spend another day or night on lock up. Your grandmother did die, but the love for you she carried deep inside lives on in her loving spirit that wants to see you do right and stay strong! It's all right to hurt, but don't let it drive you back to doing dirt 'cause you don't care without your grandmother there.

The Only One

surrounding me
engulfing me
those twisted lies
those hazel eyes
that deceiving smile
tearing away at my heart
am i the only one who sees
the only one who knows
the only one left to believe
left to love
can you see the demented beast
who haunts me
watching through her eyes
waiting to strike
am i the only one who sees
the only one who knows
the only one left to believe
left to love
am i the only one who sees
the only one who knows
the only one left to believe
left to love
nowhere to run
nowhere to hide
that crooked laugh
that deadly mind
chasing me till there's no more time
am i the only one left
to see it to feel it to know
to die by its hands
i still believe i still love
even after she killed my soul

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: To be hurt by the one you love completely, can there be anything else that hurts so deeply? But then love is not a relative thing. To speak of love thus is misunderstanding the soul's reality. And yet, a soul's fatality is seldom permanent, for the soul is born again from hellish torment. As many times as it is destroyed by pain of fire, from the flames of its funeral pyre, it can rise as the phoenix with its fiery eyes, wings beating cold, empty air — from the ashes of death, flies.

Many In My Family Were Heavily Into Drugs

I grew up with uncles who were gangsters. They all used to be affiliated with drugs, such as cocaine, crack, weed, peyote, so I grew up with them changing. Most of them used to be healthy. I've seen them have fancy cars, houses, jewelry, to being broke and in the pen. I also have cousins and many friends that are into drugs.

Me, myself, I used to use drugs like crazy. I use 'shrooms; pop, smoke weed on the daily; free-base once in a while. I overdosed on cocaine for the first time a few months ago. I went to the hospital and got felonies.

-Drug life, Marin

From The Beat: It sounds like, from what you've written, that you're over drugs, is that right? Maybe your body and mind have taken enough pounding from them. You three months clean. Right? Now what? Do you need/want a program to help you, when you're free again? If so, why don't you set one up for yourself now, while you're in juvy? It's really okay to ask for any help you need. Just because they are part of your family, it doesn't give you the right to be like them and to throw your life away like they have. You're different and it is time to show yourself the difference. Are your uncles free of drugs today?

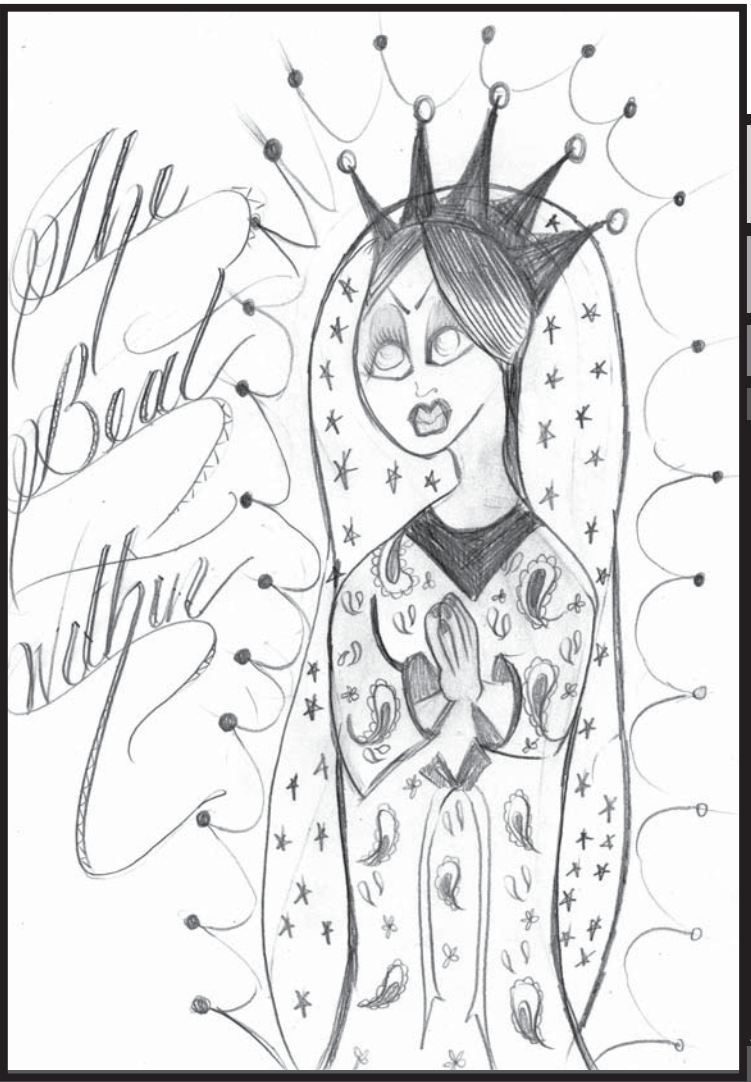
No More Losses

There's no more losses
Losses cost
And souls get dropped
And lost forever
The same feather
Of a bird
Flocks together
So let's ride together
And die together
And have our moms mourn together
We were born together
So let's stay together
For forever

Who feels me?
Soul soaked in blood
Bloodshed in a tool shed
Who said?
I said it
There's no more losses
Losses cost
Holocaust erupts
Ninjas get touched
Lose touch with reality
If only for one second
I told you
There's no more losses
If only for that second
Second guess myself
But I'm gonna reassure
There's no more losses
For real
I dedicate this to all
And to all that ain't here

-Db LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What inspired this poem? You're right–all of you in the streets are living your own Holocaust. We wish you or somebody could guarantee that the violence you're all going through would stop. But it's not really about words, it's about what all of you are actually doing out there. Why can't you and you alone aim at finding a way to live instead of dying? Even if you can't stop all the mess yourself, what are you going to do or what could you do, to get yourself out of the danger that threatens your life every day you hit the streets?



All I see, all I dream
Is to be free and succeed

My Mom Was On Crack When I Was Born

Crack affected my mind
my mom was on crack
when she was pregnant,
that's why I have an anger problem.
I wasn't born addicted,
95% of my family is crack heads, but I don't do crack.
I don't do drugs because I see what my family looks like,
I see what they been through.

-D Money, Marin

From The Beat: What do you think about that? How crack has messed up your mom and most of your family? What has it done to them? To you? How do you have the strength to stay away from it? What advice would you have for other teenagers who live in families and in communities overwhelmed with crack? Can you lend them some of your wisdom?

We Got Ambition

Who said we ain't got no ambition?
Every day is a struggle to complete our mission
Whether we locked-up or in the streets
We still play with the game, jump in the fire
And blaze the heat
All I see, all I dream
Is to be free and succeed
Doesn't everybody in my generations or my era?
Oh, now, you just see us
As wanting a legacy
With our face on a white tee
"Rest In Peace"
"Never Be Forgotten"
I see butterflies in my dreams
'Cause my new startin'
Now I gotta place
New concrete on the pavement
Wait 'til it dry
So when I step on
I won't be in shameness
I speak for everybody when I say this
"Don't judge me by my wrongs
Just me by my greatness"

-Famoso LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Very inspired poem. In what ways do you hope to become a success? You have many talents and dreams and there's no reason you can't accomplish them all. Instead of your picture on a t-shirt, we hope we'll see your photo in the paper as having succeeded in whatever you do.

My Mind

My mind is twisted I don't know what's wrong and what's right. I can't figure out what to do with myself. I'm in jail for hoeing and I can't figure....

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Obviously you feel conflicted about what you're doing. You need to survive and for now this is what you know. But you want to remain whole, to honor yourself. There are ways out. Would you be willing to use some resources that help girls transition out of prostitution and into a safe living situation, a high school diploma, a job? If the answer is yes, would you have the courage to call a woman named Nola Brantley at Scotlan Youth and Family Center who helps young women like you get out of your situation? If the answer is yes, you can call her at 510-290-6450 or you can call their hotline free at 1-888-4MISSSE.

CYA

If I can start my life from scratch, man I wouldn't
change shhh
Same bandana
Same G wagon
same hood rat chick
worker in the kitchen cookin' up my shhh....

-That Ninja

From The Beat: Well, good luck with that young Ninja. We hope the gangbanging and drug peddling work out for you. We haven't seen it work out at all, at least for those who have found their way into juvenile hall. In fact, usually it goes pretty sour and you wind up in a pretty bad situation. But hey, only you can decide what's best for you...

What I'd Do

What I'd do if judge Kay say, Taz I'm 'bout to send you home for a Family Preservation. I want you to go home and not to come back again. I would go home enroll in school, get an after school job for my lil' girl, lil' Teezy Baby Ta'Mara. I love you girl. I'm coming home and this time for good.

No mo hood rich, squad shhh. Just gon' stay home wit' you and yo' mom. Love y'all to death.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: Remember your words and your promises on the outs. We've seen too many of you break promises to yourselves and others. Don't disappoint yourself! Jail cells are a lonely place.

Send A Beat

If I can send a Beat to anyone in the world it would be my brother 'cause he locked up right now and can't get out.

-Sister

From The Beat: We can send a Beat to your brother if you tell us what his mailing address is. We'd be happy to do it. Remember to ask your Beat workshop facilitators.

Rest In Peace

I long to go to heaven to holler at lost companions,
blown like the weather,
caught another victim,
left unsolved like a mystery murder.
As the murdered go down in history,
guns throw death kisses,
gone because ninjas missing are pronounced dead
in the penitentiary.
Caught with A-R and clip
Yeah, my ninja was out to kill only because ninjas was talking shhh.

-Black

From The Beat: You have a compelling writing style. We'd like to see more from you, a longer piece. We think this may be going somewhere. Do you have more in your mind and your pen? It's such a shame that a number of young people think the best way to solve problems is to cause more problems. Guns and violence are not the answer. The answer is thinking things through, the pros and cons, and writing them down with the powerful pencil! We know too many young people washed for good 'cause of violence. Be part of the solution!

Child Of God

I am a child of God
And He has sent me here
Has given me an earthly home
With parents kind and dear
Lead me, guide me, walk beside me
Help me find a way
Teach me all that I must do
To live with Him one day
This is a song I learned in church it helps me get through my days because it reminds me of my youth

-Heather

From The Beat: Sometimes life is so confusing that it helps to believe there is someone or something greater than us with a plan. But, we can't let that get in the way of self-determination, of fighting for what we want even if it seems like the world is fighting against us.

Lookin' For A Deal

Went to see that white man (the judge/the courts) and the sun didn't shine in Oakland. They said they had a deal fo' me but it turned out it was more of a set up than a deal. So I had to fire my lawyer and that's sad 'cause he won a lot of cases for me. But I felt like he was working with the DA. They are just stupid to even ask me some shhh like that. He told me the deal was they would drop one of my charges if I agree to go to CYA now. What the hell type of deal is that?

So I go back soon, and right now I ain't got nobody to talk for me so it might get put over until I can get me a new right hand man. I got this little breezy looking for one right now. So when I get it yo' boy should be at camp.

-That Ninja

From The Beat: We don't now the whole story, but you definitely need an attorney that will work with you, educate you and helping you understand what is going on with your case, your life. So what's the latest?

You Could Put A Ninja In A Hall

You could put me in the hall
but I ain't wearing stanky ass draws.
You could take a ninja out the ghetto
but you can't take the ghetto out of me,
trick I'm a-g,
I gotta eat in these streets, survive in these streets I'm a-g.

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: We know you have to eat and that sometimes the streets might seem to rob you of choices, but remember that there are other options out there G!

Getting Out

When I get out, I'm going to try to finish my high school because I'm a senior.

-Senioritis

From The Beat: Good for you! Do it!

Crack!

Man there's a lot of crack in my community because I sell it to the crackheads and if they keep on coming then there would always be crack on the street. That is if they stop bringing it to the streets like me. I don't like it but it gives me money in my pocket.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: It also brings you days and weeks and months in jail. Eventually you wind up dead or in prison for the rest of your life, and you don't even know what you did with the money you earned from those dirty little rocks.

Given A Chance

If I was given a chance I would go home, get a job, go to school take care of my lil' girl and show her something other than the streets, 'cause ain't nothing for you in it. So I would make my last chance a good one for myself, my daughter and my family. You only got one life so I live. You come to jail once or twice, and it's good now for ten or more - you messed up. So I wanna go to court and go home and take care of my lil' girl and make sure she grows up better than her moms and pops 'cause we've had our share of problems. So I would like it very much if my PO, Judge Kay and the DA would give me another chance.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: We hope they will give you another chance too, that is if yo uare ready for that chance. Have you asked them to? Or do you play it hard like you don't care? We know lots of you youngsters feel like you have to keep muggin', even when you're dealing with people that have total control over whether you're free or locked up. Our advice is be humble, be honest, explain where you're coming from, ask them to listen as you tell your plan. Even if they don't respond, at least you know you did everything you could to be there for your daughter. IF anything have a plan in place!

Respect My Mind

Respect my mind 'cause when I'm on the block I got that gat, but it ain't about that gat it's about my mind, that's what it's about 'cause I'm about what I shout to my ninja lil Arnud in the "Y" stay up bra, and to my big bra Marty you stay up too, I'm gonna stay off the block quit serving knocks 'cause I gotta watch fo' the cops.

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: This seems more true to the Damani we hope to know. It is about your mind and that's why you need to use it! In the end, your mind is a lot more powerful than any gun, and we hope you choose to exercise your brain instead of carrying a gat on the block. What's the plan to staying off the block?

How I'm Livin'

How I'm living?
Police on me can't be slippin
I ain't trippin'
but I'm still dippin'
but I ain't talking about a car I'm talking the bars,
chopped stay chopping but I'm still mobbing.

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: Well Damani, we're not exactly sure how to respond to this particular piece. Each week we see how intelligent you are, but you seem to be stuck in an unproductive mindset. We hope you come around and listen to your own better judgment—and realize your own potential, before freedom is just a memory.

Mama Told Me

My mom always told me one too many times "You done screwed up."

-Young F

From The Beat: Well did you? Most people do at one time or another. That's how we learn to do things the right way. But if you don't learn from your mistakes, then you may have a difficult path in front of you.

Long To Go

I want to go to college or to the army reserve. Be a basketball player.

-Erin

From The Beat: Good luck with those things. We can't help but root for the college route—the army would take you from one war (that of the streets) to another.

Brazil! Or Florida!

I long to go to Brazil! Or Florida! I want to go see all kinds of females there. I ain't never went no farther than Reno.

I would be cool to do it one day movin' from the turf and see co-ed type video breezies — and do it big — and blow it down in the telly — and be wit' one of them fine women in the telly, if you know what I mean.

-Young Keith

From The Beat: Maybe you'd rather take a cruise on the Love Boat, 'cause it sounds like flirtation and romance is your dream, experiencing a tropical party scene!

I Got Shot

My life started going bad when I got shot. Before I got shot, I was eatin' on the block! I had like four racks stacked and two zips.

But when I got shot, everything went bad. All my friends started going to jail at the same time. And it all stopped my money flow.

-Ant

From The Beat: That's the way the game goes. It sets a youngster up with a cash flow that's more money than he ever saw, and then he gets shot or caught up by the law. It never lasts for too long! Living that street life you know is wrong (you know 'cause of the things you've done), will always end in arrest, hospitals or death. Quit and go legit — get your pay the legal way so healthy, happy and free you can stay.

Fast Money

fast money comes real quick
yeah fast money brings bullshhh
sometimes it can get you stripped
sometimes it can get you a full clip
you get the baddest chicks
you get them super-thick
put you behind the wettest whips
put your higher than you can sit
death is probably tomorrow
life is only being borrowed

-D'Tay

From The Beat: Yeah, life is borrowed, but when you're always chasing that fast money, you forget to renew your name in the Book of Life — make yourself a target for a club, gun or knife that makes death come take your life way before your appointed time. That's what you get living the fast life of fast-money crime! Why settle for a bad chick when you could have true love with good woman that is everlasting? Even after death, love goes on — if you don't believe in God, then look at your daughter or son and see the blessing living a good life can be. Work hard and stay free so you can have a two-car garage and a big house filled with family whose love for you will never die. Yeah, life is borrowed, but love you create lives tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. Why trade all that for fast cash that never lasts long. Come on!

Home

i love my mom
i just want to go home
i messed up
i love my dad too
but he is dead
r i p dad

-Bobbie

From The Beat: You will go home. It's just a matter of time. So make up your mind what and how you'll do different next time.

How I Went Down

Man, this Momo, you know, 'hood approved. What about you? Me and my lil' brah went down early morning Friday on the street where we got a crib to stay by day and make our pay — you know we poppin'!

Yeah, man, then they kicked in the door early mornin'! No black-and-white, all Taz (Task Force) and homicide. We was off hella Bo and Rem'bo, you know? And they caught us, lil' bra and me both hella mad! Love. One.

-Momo

From The Beat: Time to get mad at you! You're here because of what you do. Yeah, you can blame this or that time getting caught on bad luck or slippin' or snitchin' or whatever. But if you're truly clever you'll see through the excuses and realize that you'll keep getting caught until you refuse to do what you used to do — drankin', druggin', slangin', thuggin' will be the end of your freedom if not just plain the end of you. Wake up and be coo'. Change what you do to make your pay. Okay?

Long To Go To Court

I am longing to go to court. I am waiting to go to court so I can get released and be home with my family, my loved ones and my lady. I've been longing for the last six months I've been in Camp even when I'm home on the weekends.

It's not the same knowing I have to go back to camp so I'm always longing. But I'm waiting to get out soon.

My PO is trying to set my court date, that will be the day I take another shot at being in society, and living like a normal person.

I'll be home soon, they can't keep me forever. I'm out.

-Lazy

From The Beat: It's good to hear that you're on your way home, we hope you give up all the associating (you know what we're talking about) that got you in this messed up situation in the first place. Because the sad, hard, horrible truth is that they CAN keep you forever. Think of how many talented, loving people with families have ended up serving Life. The system has power, and the system is hungry, but it's not too late to get out. If you change your ways.

Just Be Me

My goal for when I'm free, is to just be me! Go out and find a job to help my mom pay bills. I plan to finish school.

I also got to get ready for my kid, and I need to stay out of trouble so I can take care of my mom, my wifey and my kid. To my wifey, I love you and miss you. I'll be home soon.

-Tito

From The Beat: So you got here by trying to be someone else, someone you're really not? Fashow then just be you! 'Cause from what you write here, man, you are truly hella cool and no one's fool. We're proud to say we feel the love in you and your desire to see it through to doing what you really need to do.

Not Doing Too Well

What's up Beat, this is Grim. I'm not doing too well today, February 06, 2007.

I just got two write-ups for a KOC (Kicked Out of Class). I'm not sure if I'm going home this weekend. It seems like I'm messing up. I'm not listening to staff no more but I need to if I want to make it through this program.

Well to whoever comes to camp, don't get staff mad. They take everything personal. Well I'm not sure if to run or not run. I only got a few more months left. I hope I make it. Well that's all for now, 'till next time paper meets pencil.

-Grim

From The Beat: What's good is that we know that you didn't run. That means that you got over this bump and you're back on track to freedom. Also, it shows heart that you took a minute out from your troubles to pass on advice to the other young people who will find themselves up at camp. Now you've just got to do this program (at camp) and more importantly, do a program of your own, where you decide what you want in your life and go for it. What is that program?

Dancing

Well I want to start with my dancing. So my dancing gets me a lot of respect at my school. Because of my dancing I almost came famous but I didn't show up to this little thing that this celebrity gave me a free pass to, this show where these other celebrities at and I wanted to go so bad but I didn't have a ride there.

-Anthony

From The Beat: So sorry you weren't able to take advantage of that opportunity and we hope another one comes along your way. Maybe you will one day use your dancing professionally, and if your path leads you somewhere else at least its something that will always bring you joy.

Send a Beat

I will send it to a rapper or any singer, or an elementary, middle, or high school.

-Erin

From The Beat: And what do you think those people would get from reading The Beat?

This Life Style

This life style I live! Man, being a young kid tryin'a hustle to get it, I'll tell you how I live it. Ya boy been through it all once — I get up, I fall!

But you know I'm solid. So you know I stand tall, livin' life like a villain. Man, I'll tell ya how I'm feelin' — I stay chasing the cash to do it. You gotta beast it and be a sav'.

-Lil' Glen

From The Beat: Don't kid yourself, you're not living a life but a death style — it's a form of Russian roulette, a form of suicide. And the ones that don't die, live most of their lives locked up inside, either with one long sentence or many shorter ones (caught in the system's revolving door). If you play the beast, they will put you in the zoo and treat you like an animal. If you take your freedom and sav' it — you'll never have it long. Get a legitimate hustle and stay strong.

Brazilian Holiday

If I could go anywhere in the world, I would go to Brazil, just because I've heard that they have lots of females! Even though I already have a son, I would have children with those beautiful women! That's about it.

-Larry

From The Beat: Having children is a blessing and a joy, but if it is to continue being a blessing — you need to accept the personal and financial responsibilities of being a father. There are men who have children by more than one woman and still stay a part of their children's lives while they continue to provide financial support as well. If you don't, you threaten to make your own flesh-and-blood's childhood a living hell.

I'm Through

Roses are red, violets are blue
the judge give me twenty-eight years
my ass is through
what can I do
my friends talking 'bout I'm going to write you
but that ain't go help
my ass is through
but mom is tripping
I happy I'm in here 'cause on the streets I'm slippin'
so what can I do cause my ass its through
even though I'm a boss people mess wit' me
chop it up as a loss
it pays a cost to be boss floss.
You can put a me in the hall
All I'm going to do is tag up the walls
You can take lil' bra rec
but I'm still going have all my respect.

-Young Savage

From The Beat: Your poem has so many levels to it; we hope you keep writing through these tough times. The Beat is here to listen to your words no matter where your time takes you.

Ain't Trippin'

My life turned black and white when my brothers got locked up and like four of my good ass potnas were locked up. I ain't trippin tho'. I don't see my brothers no more. I get letters from one of them though.

He is in San Quentin right now again. I don't know where my other brother's at. Last I heard from him he was in Santa Rita about to get out. But all my homies is out now so it's just this youngsta held down now, and I only got a petty ass five months left so I ain't mad.

-Young B

From The Beat: You ain't mad. You ain't trippin'. Well then we'll get mad and trip for you. We're mad because you and the people you loved have had so much drama, so much institutionalization, so many dark nights behind locked doors. Part of it is for all sorts of things about where you live, what you grew up around, this messed up world. Part of it is a lot of straight up stupid choices you've made in the past. So why are we trippin'? Because you're writing as if this is normal, and it's not. Life can be better than this... people who were born into your situations have pulled up out of them and gone on to have great jobs, beautiful children, loving families, gardens outside their doors and sunlight streaming in the windows. In other words – lives in color. Don't settle for black and white.

To The Moon

What's crack-a-lackin'? It's your homie Curiosito from Hayward and today's topic is about where would I like to go. If I had one wish to go somewhere I would wish to go to the moon. I would take my girl Jessica to the moon for one day and take a big ass bed with soft covers and many-many pillows all feather stuffed and make love.

-Curioso

From The Beat: Maybe you should change your name to Mr. Romantico! This may end up being your last Beat piece, and we're glad you go out on a note of safe-love for your girl. Just do what you can to stay with her! Outside, not inside. Free, not imprisoned. Peaceful, instead of in violence. All our best.

Superbowl Update

What's Good wit' you Beat? Man I was hella disappointed that my predictions didn't come true about this last Superbowl.

I could have sworn that the Bears was going to win it. I feel that the Colts didn't even beat the Bears, to be fair. The Bears beat themselves. I mean if you seen it you would know what I'm talking about, with all those QB sacks and fumbles and thrown interceptions. They were setting themselves up for failure. I'm not even that disappointed because neither of my favorite teams made it ...but the game should have been better than it was.

-Kraz

From The Beat: By the time this gets printed you'll be off to YA, which is just too bad, because we're going to miss your weekly commentaries – about the news, about sports, about your past and future. This is a good note to end on though, because it makes us wonder if we'll be hearing from you again – as a Sportscaster! Stay in touch with The Beat, and good luck.

I Ain't Gon' Lie

What's sup wit' it Beat? This is Phatty up at Camp Sweeney. I'm just tryin to do my program. I just got here but I'm getting out in late March 2007, so when I get out hella people are going to hate on me 'cause I been here since late January 2007.

Well I get back at you next week. I ain't gon' to lie, when I get out I'm going to go take my wifey out to eat, then some other stuff and feel me then go smoke a blunt and get my money.

The thing that I'm least looking forward to is changing I'm gone stay the same. I'm in here for going to get some food on home supervision but I got on probation. But it wasn't my fault.

-Nick

From The Beat: Being straight up and honest is always the right way to go, even when you're writing things that make us shake our heads over at TBW HQ. Why do we shake our heads? Because when you tell us you're going to head straight back to your old ways, we know that means that we'll be seeing you again – in here, where you hate it. Funny how you say you want to stay the same, not change. But you know what changes people? Institutionalization, the stress of street life, using drugs, all that. If you really want to stay the same person we see each in workshop, friendly, funny, open-hearted, then getting OUT of you self destructive habits is the best way to do it.

My Main Focus

I got to court tomorrow and I'm 'bout to be in court for hell long waitin'. My main focus is to keep my head up, get through this and get out, soon as possible, so I can start back gettin' money.

I want a job. Hopefully I won't be playin, got on my shhh and got this money. But my main focus to stay out of jail.

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: We made that last line your title, because it was such a good summary of what you're going through. Your main focus is to stay out of jail. So how will you do that? You took that first step of writing it down, and now you need three things: 1. Friends that won't get you in trouble 2. School, to help you get access to higher paying jobs in the future 3. A job that challenges you. We've got all sorts of ideas on how you could get support on all three of these things, but we're not the ones that really matter, right? What matters is you, and how bad you want you want to stick to that main focus. So Marcus, how bad do you want it?

If I Was Not in This Place...

I would be at home playing games and hanging out with my friends.

-Anon

From The Beat: This is short but sweet – and lists just one of the many things you miss out on when you're locked up. Next time give us more, and don't forget to sign your name so you can be credited for what you say!

Off the Rail

What's good Beat. My topic is how I learned how to play pool, 'cause The Beat saw me playing up here at camp. I'm just hella raw, 'cause I'm a gangsta. I learned to play pool when I was little. I don't remember the exact age.

My cousin taught me ...he lived in Oakland. He had a pool table and I used to go over like every day, and I started liking to play pool. Now I have a pool table in my house and I play all day.

-Savage

From The Beat: Here's what it takes to be good at pool: Dedication, because you need to practice every day. Focus, because you have to keep your eye on the ball no matter what is going on in the background. Honesty, because if you cheat you'll get busted and lose the game. A cool head, because if you get hot and flash your game will go down. In other words, all the skills you used to get good at pool are skills you can use to make it in life, if you choose a goal that you want to have. What's your goal? It's gotta be more than just being "hella raw."

I'm Missing Out

I want to go all over the world. Travel over the entire world. Experience all types of cultures first hand. And travel overseas. Yes my mind is vivid in what I can achieve.

The world itself is a large place.

I want to go to Peru. I hear that there are many exotic animals, and women. If it was possible I'd go now. It's so many things in life that I'm missing out on.

-Gator

From The Beat: Seems like the first step towards getting your dreams is having them. So if you're letting yourself dream big, about what you want in the future, that means a small part of you believes that you could have it. And yes! Crowded restaurants in Tokyo! Boat trips up the Amazon! Safari's in Africa! Mountain climbing in Peru. And yes, beautiful women everywhere, it that's something you dream about too. So now you just need to ask yourself what it would take to have those adventures. First thing is freedom. Getting it and keeping it. Can you do that for starters?

Some Cool Shhh

I was just on the phone with one of my girls and she wasn't talkin' about too much though. I'm just tryin' to get some money from her she is about to give me like fifty dollars to put on my house phone, for I could start calling more.

She's just ready for a ninja. I was just talking to my bra so 'for I could get this shhh out the way, if y'all know what I mean I mess with my ninjas I'm 'bout to holla y'all next week.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: One thing we've noticed is that in all your pieces you write about the short term stuff – a girl you miss, a phone call you just had, a message out to your boys, etc... but you never talk about long term stuff. It leaves you a bit of a mystery to us (and the rest of the BW readers as well), or it makes you come off asa a person who doesn't care about bettering his life. So here are some questions for you, you ready? They basically boil down to this: Where are you going, and where have you been? Meaning: How did you end up on the road to the Hall to begin with? What do you see as your future? What are you most proud of in your life? What are you most ashamed of? What we're saying is, dig a little deeper next time.... We can tell from talking to you that there's a whole lot going on under the surface... and that's where the best writing and art and expression comes from: Under the surface. Bring it!

It's Nothing

It's nothing I could do, but use it or don't use it.

-Erin

From The Beat: What do you mean by use it or don't?

In My Heart

My life has been half way great. I get out in 3 months so pray for me please.

My lil' sister is a four year old and she is my heart. And one day police came and got me from my house and she keep on asking me if I was going to jail and I was crying it hurt me.

Then I got out and I took her to the park and took her to the movies, that's how much she's my heart. I buy her Jordans, clothes, and so many other things.

-Isaac

From The Beat: Your sister must love you and depend on you, but even though she looks up to you as her big brother, in same ways, she can do as much for you as you can for her. That part of you that feels so much love for her is more powerful than the street, more powerful than temptation, more powerful than anything the system could throw at you. If you hold on tight to the feelings you have for her, to your dreams of giving her a good life, and to the image of you she must have (she sees you through the eyes of love, she sees the best in you, and the real you), it can help you stay out and stay on point. Thanks for writing such a moving piece.

RIP T-Money, Happy Birthday

My love, you gone, but you still in my heart, mind, body and soul, babe, twenty-four seven.

Man, I'm mad you ain't here. Forget those cats that pulled that move. They mad 'cause you was buildin' somethin'. Them ninjas don't really pay they' dues. Ya lil' sis', man, got me hella confused.

I'm sitting here doing time, knowing damn well I'm hella missing you. Man, I remember that one time. Yeah, you know, smiling with love. Baby, I'm sorry but I got to go, but you know I won't let you go-go-go-go-go! Hell no, baby! You already know. Love you, boy! RIP.

-Charlie Hustle

From The Beat: In the street game, it's all castles in sand. Nothing that gets built will stand for long. Fast as it comes, it's gone. That goes for money, freedom and life itself — 'cause it's not a life style but a death style that way of chasing wealth. It's guaranteed to be hazardous to your health. Never stop loving those who've given their lives, but you've got to show love to the ones that survived till today. Stop the killing! Make your living another way. RIP T-Money. Tell Charlie to quit and go legit, 'cause too many already passed away.

Brazil

I would love to go to Brazil and find me a fine nice woman, so I get married and have me some mixed babies. Then I can learn to speak their language and teach them how to speak English and have a nice house on the beach so whenever we have sex I can hear the water and it would be more sexy.

-Aaron

From The Beat: Siga seus sonhos! That's how they say "Follow Your Dreams" in Brazil. So how will you do this, young Aaron, minus the babies? You need to a. get out of jail b. get your education on so that when you're in Brazil you can get a job (plus a lot of colleges have programs where you can study abroad for one year) and you need to get the negative influences out of your life so that you can focus on school and work and getting financial aid for college. We know that sounds like a lot, but hey if you want to get to Brazil, you have every right to... even if we can't comment on the non-PG-13 related reasons for wanting to go there. Siga seus sonhos, wherever they may take you.

Rest In Heaven

Me I lost my little bra and he wasn't even one,
man
I felt like shootin' a ninja wit a gun 'cause right
then and there I didn't give a damn
This goes out to all that's locked up
if you lost someone and you don't give a damn
all hope is not lost 'cause I'm still on top of my
game, I'm the boss.

-Lil' Dizil

From The Beat: We're sorry for your loss, but we're really hoping that you see the flaw in using violence as retribution. There's no excuse for taking someone else's life, especially in the name of a loved one.

That Car

Man look at that car
I know it's the wrong thang to do
but I got bars.
Me and my ninjas ride around thinking we stars
but soon 5-0 blurp
we gone be back locked behind bars.
So just think about the hall
wearing hella ninjas draws
wit' then nasty ass walls.

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: Yes—remember what it is to be locked up and use those memories to stay free. That means taking responsibility for your actions and for your future.

I just want the judge to know that I am going to learn from the mistake I made

RIP Emmit

what's up e-baby
this yo' lil' cousin
lil' dirty — emmit
we used to go brah
it's like we was
doing some hot thangs
like livin' fast but
not livin' right
and you lost yo' life
you'll never be fo'gotten

-Lil' Dirty

From The Beat: The only way to save the lives of the ones you love who are still living that life, is to get your mind right. Be part of the solution not part of the problem. Quit living a death style that kills one by one, while you still have a chance to live in the sun. RIP Emmit. Tell your brah Dirty it time to end it.

Fatima

Happy Valentine's Day Mamish
I know you wish the same for your Pamish
It seems just like yesterday that we were
together.
But yet so far.
Now I'm in here facin' the stormy weather.
I loved all the romantic times we had
When we were in my room we were always glad.
I like to reminisce of us and what we had in life.
Sometimes when I do, it's pain in my heart. It
feels like a knife
You know yo' daddy loves you no matter what.
So I'm gonna cut this one short and cut.
So you don't got to think twice about that I love
you always
Yo' daddy
Who? Yo' daddy --

-Mike Jonez

From The Beat: We've been given a glimpse into the ups and downs of the love you share with your girl, the ups and the downs, and it's like a stream of life in the desert of imprisonment. It's the power of your poetry that brought that life to us – keep using that power to sustain yourself in the months to come. Never stop creating, teaching, making art out of your pain. No judge or guard or sentence can take that privilege away from you. It's yours to keep.

Girls

I wish I could see all my people that's locked up for life and the ones that's gone. We would all go to places all over the world and get money and see the thickest woman in the universe. I love gettin' money and watchin' thick girls.

-Lil' Dame

From The Beat: We were of two minds about printing up this piece. On one hand, we want to print your writings as much as possible, we believe in freedom of expression and try to have as few rules as we can about what you can say, on the other hand, there's a respect issue here. Or to put it this way: Would you want your daughter, sister, girlfriend, mom to be a stripper, which we cut out of your piece? And if not, why? Ball's in your court, tell us what you think.

Dear Love

Dear Love, you is the most beautiful thing I seen
I can close eyes and still see your face, you know what I mean
You like a shiny sun that's light all day
Why the love you give me I didn't have to pay
Dear love, this isn't no unborn feelin'
This is not that you have given
Open window in birds singing is sweet
Beautiful the only thing my eyes can't beat. Why?
Dear love, me and you is like the sun against the moon
You know when my love is comin' soon.
Days also nights, cold feelings don't seem right.
I promise I'll never leave you again, all right
Dear love, this love game is not fake
It makes you break down like a broken car tape
We on top of the world
I'm your man and Mykel dear love you're my girl.

-Lil Papa F. Mykel Baby

From The Beat: "It makes you break down like a broken car tape!" Just one of many terrific lines in this lyrical love poem. We hope you keep that promise, both for you and your girl!

"You Got It — Don't Make Me Go In Yo' Pocket"

You know what's up, people that are reading this Beat. This yo' boy Lil' Sammy from Oakland. I just want to say I've been coming to the Hall since I was ten years old.

I know I should've learned, but it's hard when you get on the stupid probation program, 'cause if you are not good with your PO, she can bring you back. But I want to learn from this experience, because now the judge wants to send me to the CYA! I just want the judge to know that I am going to learn from the mistake I made. If he can send me to a group home, I will stay and complete the program.

Right now I am in the med's unit in 150 Hall, staying up and just being solid. Man, I am through with this stupid juvenile hall! To all the staff, I know that I should've stopped when I first came in. So all I have to say now is when you see me in the out, say wassup! 'Cause you know I want it! Don't make me go in your pockets!

-Lil' Sammy

From The Beat: We'll take that last line and title, as a joke. 'Cause we know you can't be threatening really to rob staff in the out, not at the same time you're asking the judge to send you to a group home! Even if you go to the Y, the lesson stays the same — no more crime. It's the only way you can guarantee you will serve no more time. Of course, it's easier to say you're ready to change when you're in here than it is to make it a fact out in the world when you're free and clear — or on probation trying to get away with what you can instead of sticking to that positive master plan for your own sake. Your life's at stake!

Send My Girlfriend A Beat Poem

If I could sent a Beat to anyone in the world, I would send my girlfriend a poem out of The Beat. I want her to learn how much I love her and care about her.

Then I will explain to her where I got the beautiful and touching words from! What I really want her to learn, is how to be a girlfriend. I want her to learn how to love me the way I want to loved.

-County Food

From The Beat: We recommend you take inspiration from your favorite love poems in The Beat Within, but that you write a poem from your heart that could be written by no one else and for no one else. How else can you teach her what you really want her to know?

Doin' Right

I'm getting out on the 31st and I'm not going to come back to this place. I'm going to do right. I'm going to get a job and keep it, and I going to stop smokin' and do what I have to do at home so I can stay at home and not come back here. Oh, and also get my grades back up to A's and B's.

-Tay U2

From The Beat: We like all your goals, but we hope that last one isn't just an afterthought. Staying in school and getting a decent education is the foundation for all the other things you hope to accomplish.

Long To Go To Puerto Rico

I have always wanted to go to Puerto Rico because I've seen movies with Puerto Rico as the scene, and it beautiful. So are the women. I've never been out of California, much less on out the United States, so I think that would be a good experience for me. Plus if it's really fun like how it looks like on the movies, I would want to possibly move down there.

-Tabari U2

From The Beat: We've been to PR, and it is very beautiful. There are very beautiful people there, too (and some who aren't so beautiful...) We definitely agree that getting out of California and out of the country would be a good experience for you, because we think that travel outside of the familiar always brings knowledge and makes us better people.

Long To Go To The Philippines

I want to go to the Philippines. I want to go there because I have family out there. Plus, personally I think Filipino woman are the most beautiful out there. Next in line comes those islander ladies. I would also like to go to Tokyo because I love video games and those Japanese cartoons. Plus I heard that Tokyo was like Japan central.

-Deezy U2

From The Beat: Tokyo is the capital of Japan, and it is one of the biggest cities in the world — much, much bigger than San Francisco! We've been to the Philippines, and the women are quite beautiful there, as well as the countryside. We hope you get your chance to travel outside the country since we believe it is the best non-school education you can get.

Trip To New York City

What's good with that good Beat thang? This ya boy, Twon, coming from that Unit 3 status. Well, I'm 'bout to put you up on game about a place ya boy tryin' to touch down on, and that place is New York, because how they style is and the way they talk, and that they get most of gear and shoes before we do. Like they get most of the J-Jonas and Akademiks clothes before us.

Like, for example, they be like this when they talk: "Ey, B, that shorty was so hot and mad crazy when she seen my mans walk down the street, so I told my mans, like, 'Ey, Money, Shorty up the way, feeling you, yo!' So he told me, 'I'm go get at Shorty, because she looking so hot and she is so ill to me, yo!' So I said, 'All right, then, duke. I'm outie, yo!'"

-Twon U3

From The Beat: Do you think if you visited New York City that you might also be interested in some other things besides the fashions and the lingo, like the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, Central Park or Broadway?

Somewhere Hot

If had somewhere I could go. I would go somewhere that's very nice. And be with my family and see lots of water falls. And it's very hot with a lot of females and a basketball court.

-Lil' Gee U7

From The Beat: Do you have some place in mind? Hawaii? Jamaica? A different island? Where?

Long To Go To The Bahamas

I want to go to the Bahamas. One reason why is because it's tropical and hot. Another reason is because I heard it's very nice and a lot of people go there on vacation, so it must be a place to go.

-Anonymous U2

From The Beat: We don't know why you don't want to give yourself a Beat name, but we agree with you that the Bahamas must be a nice place to go. We've never been, so can you take us with you?

A Lil' Bit 'Bout My Life

Up in the halls is cold. At da house is dummy cold. Da only places that warm to me is my girl house, church, and where all my raza reside. It's warm fo' me too where I got hella ninjas. I got my baby momma and my baby yet to be born, waiting for me to come up out tha damn halls and go home. I love my family, my block, my carnales, my girl and my baby, the Bay, especially my city, San Francisco.

-Luis

From The Beat: We don't think you're ready to hear this, but soon it will be clear whether you love your carnales and block more than you love your girl and baby. If you keep doing the things that give the system power to take you from your loved ones, then we'll know your baby wasn't as important to you as your boys. If you have the strength and courage to do what's right for that baby (who didn't ask to come into the world), it will mean that you'll never be back here. The choice is yours, but for sure, it can't be both.

If I Could Go Back In Time

If I could go back in time, I would tell all my friends that died to get off the block right before they got shot. If I could go back in time everything I did I'll stop myself from doing it. If I could go back in time I would not be in the halls.

-Re-B U2

From The Beat: Well, since you can't go back in time, what changes do you plan to make in the future so you won't have to worry about not being able to go back in time?

The Future

My goals when I get out is to go to City College and get my GED, get me a job and start a life without drama with these streets. I ready to get my own place and provide for myself. It not like I don't do that now, I just ready to do it the legit way.

-Lil' D The Mainyack U2

From The Beat: We don't know if you're calling yourself "a maniac" or "the main yack," but we like your goals whatever you call yourself. You can't say you've really been providing for yourself if you do things that let the county taxpayers take care of you in places like this. You've got a plan. Stick to it!

A Trip To New Orleans To Swim

What's good wit' The Beat? This ya boy, Tariq. It's been a hot minute since ya boy touch down on the streets. But a place that ya boy tryin' to see is New Orleans, because that's mad crazy "B," just because tha shhh that's happenin'. But, anyways, I'm out this hole. So, therefore, like Lil' Weezy said, "I'm done talkin'!"

-Tariq U3

From The Beat: You really didn't do much "talkin'" at all. When you write, don't take the lazy way by putting down three or four sentences that tell us almost nothing. For example, what's "tha shhh that's happenin'" in New Orleans that makes it attractive to you? What's "mad crazy" about it? How long have you wanted to go there? Do you have family there? What do you want to see there? Are you interested in what makes that city so very famous, its music and its food? There's so much more you could have written...

Long To Go To Cuba

I would want to go to Cuba because that is where my people are from. My pops is from Cuba and I always wanted to see how my pops grew up, and see if it was as hard of a life like mine.

Keep yo' head up pops. Things ain't as bad as you think it is. I'm in the same situation as you.

-Cuba U2

From The Beat: If you went to Cuba, would you be surprised if the conditions of life there were even more difficult than what you face here? Without spare parts or gasoline, would you be willing to walk to work, or ride an old bike? What are you doing so that you don't remain in your father's situation?

Long To Go To New Mexico

I would wanna go to New Mexico because of the girls. I would wanna go to the Atlanta because I never seen none of my family. None of them.

I would wanna play basketball for the L.A Lakers. No thank you, not a plane ride or boat. Yes I would love to walk on beach and walk on the bridge. I never been in the garage and I been in medical.

-Maurice U2

From The Beat: This is kind of confusing, Maurice. What do you mean you've never been in the garage and you have been in medical? We don't understand. Why don't you want to ride in a plane or boat? Why do you think the girls in New Mexico are any different from the girls in any other place? Who are the relatives you have in Atlanta? Do you see how many questions you didn't answer, and how to make a Beat piece truly a good piece of writing? Add the details.

Life In The Halls

Man, what it do with The Beat? This yo' boy Neil just holdin' it up in here. Man, I'm just sayin' this ain't the life in the hall. Man you gotta be on yo' act in the hall because they want ta give time for nothin'.

But I'm just sayin', man, if this your first time stay out because it ain't coo' in here, not at all. I'm just sayin' be on your stuff all day and every day because you don't know what they up to.

Man, if you in here for a long time you will start being on yo' stuff. Man, but this ain't nothin' so don't even think about time. This yo' boy comin' from Unit 4 holdin' it.

-Weedbles U4

From The Beat: What difference does it make whether this is your first time or your tenth time? Doesn't your advice to "stay out" apply to both equally? In fact, if you've been here more than once, it seems like you like it more than you say, otherwise you'd figure out what's leading you here and stop doing it. There's some confused thinking here, Neil. How can you tell people to stay out because "this ain't the life," but then say, "this ain't nothin'?" When will it become something? Maybe when you see how you —your freedom and your life — are something, maybe then this will be something too.

Long Way To Go

I have a long way to go. I must wait in this shhh hole for nine of them thangs. You know how it go. Yo' PO don't give a damn, wanna lock you up for smoking grapes and super train wreck for poppin' them thangs.

Nine months! A ninja be like that's hella long, but I hope and pray that I get out sooner. But as I sit in this cell I'm like, "Damn! I got a long way to go."

-O'M U2

From The Beat: You took the wrong definition of the word "long." We meant the verb, to long for something — to want something really bad, like you long to get out of here. But anyway, if you choose to smoke grapes and pop pills, you're also choosing the consequences. If it's worth it, keep doing it. If it's not, then stop. Seems pretty straight forward to us.

Someplace I Never Been

I would go to Amsterdam so I could smoke all the weed I want, because it is legal to smoke out there. And I think it would be a nice place to for somebody who don't get away much, and also if you like to smoke.

-Lil' Curt U3

From The Beat: Do you mean that you don't smoke all you want right here (when you're free)? Most adults reading this would smile and say to themselves, "Well, when he grows up, he'll understand how much more there is to see in Amsterdam than going to a coffee shop to smoke weed." Amsterdam is full of history and art, narrow streets with cobble stones and canals that criss-cross the city. You could see the tiny attic where Anne Frank and two families hid from the Nazis for two years — before they were caught and murdered in the concentration camps. You could see paintings by Rembrandt and Van Gough. You could see a city that moves by bicycle and on foot. You could experience so much that would broaden your mind... but then again, you probably would miss all of that because you want to do what you already do right here in this great city. What a pity!

Glen Mills

Man, what up with da Beat? Man, yeah, dis ya boy D-boom and it's almost about that time fo' a young thugga to get it movin' to Philly ya Dig. But really though, I'm kind of glad that I'm doin' somethin' different with my life, 'cause all this other shhh ain't even da code no mo', ya dig. But I'ma just do the lil' program so I could be back to the San Francisco on da block. Ya dig.

-Daddy-O U4

From The Beat: We don't think you dig. What you're telling us is that you're going to go through the motions at Glen Mills just so you can return to the things that got you here to begin with. In other words, you're telling us (and the system) that you like it here so much that you're laying out a road map that leads you right back here or other places where strangers tell you what to do and when to do it. Well, there's no accounting for some taste. We would hate it here, and we would take advantage of any opportunity to learn a way to stay out (the opportunity that Glen Mills presents). You, on the other hand, apparently love it here, because this is the consequence you have announced you will be choosing in the future. Well, at least you're giving a lot of people work.

I'll Be Back Someday

I will soon be out the Ranch... Once I get out, I will try my best in fulfilling my goals. And most important is to stay out of the system! I will not promise, but try my best. '05-'07 sucks. I hope I'll be out before '08 so I can start all over.

-Lil' Eric U5

From The Beat: All anyone can ask is that you try your best. How do you hope to fulfill your dreams? What are those dreams? Maybe the Year of the Pig will bring you the successes you're looking for.

When Colors Went Black And White

My life lost color when I started to grow up. First I seen things that I should've never saw. Second is when I grew up and did things I regret. Third is when I was trying to grow up fast and not worrying about my family and friends. Last is being in here locked up, with the DA trying to charge me as an adult.

But I continue to strive for hope and make the best of my situation.

-Young Green U4

From The Beat: This has the potential to be an excellent piece of writing, if you filled in the blanks. Each thing on your list makes us want more information, the "what" and the "why." But even more than that, we want to know how you plan to make the best of your situation (which is a goal all of us try to achieve). We certainly hope the DA fails in his attempt to charge you as an adult because, whatever the DA calls you, you are not an adult. Think about what it means to be an adult, and what you need to do to become one. Then strive for that.

RIP Me-Me

My ninja, Me-Me, got killed the other day. Ninjas was hatin' on her. Ninjas was just mad because she was out there, getting it, and shining on ninjas, so they decided to take her life away. Now her mom gotta go the rest of her life without her daughter, and her sister gotta go the rest of her life without her.

I'll see you again some day, but this time it will be in a better place. RIP, Me-Me. You gone but never forgotten. See you later. We all we got. I love you.

-Mike U3

From The Beat: Another tragic and unnecessary death. Do you understand that every death like this leaves some mother grieving for her son or daughter, some sister or brother without a sibling, and some loving friend with nothing more than a memory?

Let Me Go To Guatemala

I want to go to Guatemala. Dat's where ma fam is from. I got a lotta family down there dat I never seen before, and dat I only seen a couple of times. But I already know it's gon be crackin' out there. So can't wait to get out.

-Lil 'Spitta U4

From The Beat: Have you ever been to Guatemala? How do you imagine it looks down there? Do you think you will like the jungle? When you get out of here, what's your plan for putting yourself on a legitimate path that will allow you to make this dream a reality?

This Ain't Da Life

What's good wit da thugs? Just chillin', waitin' to get out dis place 'cause a ninja been in here for like three months but holdin' it up wit' ma ninjas.

A ninja tired of dis shhh, wearin' another ninja drawers an' eatin' dis nasty-ass food, an' drinkin' hella milk with everything, an' hella bread and butter.

Dis shhh ain't da life, but I ain't tellin' you to stop thuggin' but be smart about what you do an' do it by yo'self, no co-defendants.

-Poon-G U4

From The Beat: We're not telling you to "stop thuggin'" either. All we're telling you is that if you continue to thug, then we simply do not believe you say "a ninja tired of t his place." Your actions were what put you here and your actions, if you continue them, will put you here again. It's as clear as the night following the day. Maybe soon you will really be tired of coming here, but nothing in this piece tells us you're there yet.

Following My Uncle

If I was able to send a Beat to my uncle because he would be able to see dat I am going the same route as he was going and what route he still is going through. And let him know dat it is not cool to be going down dis path I am going down and doing dumb shhh. He will tell me I might end up like him doing three strikes.

-Jamaine U4

From The Beat: We're really sorry your uncle is serving a three-strikes sentence. But it's obvious that you don't need him to tell you that what you're doing is going to land you in the same place. You already know that.

I'm Gonna Shine Again

Man, what's the word, bird? I'm most definitely feelin' this topic because it seem like now that's how it is. It's hella dark. But since I been in the halls just have time to think and that's what I do. But it ain't gonna be dark for long, and I'm gon' shine again.

To my brother Bola, I love you and keep yo' head up.

-DM U4

From The Beat: It's good that you realize the darkness you're experiencing now is not a permanent thing, and that you have it in your power to shine again. At the same time, we'd like to know what your definition of "shine" is, and how you see yourself getting there.

Seeing Other 'Hoods

I long to go to the Philippines, to Miami and to Chicago. Why? To see what it's like, and to see all the girls that's there and to see what people go through not just in different 'hoods.

-Dm U4

From The Beat: We're pretty sure the girls look just about the same whether you're in Miami or San Francisco. But traveling to other places is always a good thing, because it let's you see your world through the eyes of others, which lets you grow and develop, and understand just how big the world is.

Longing To Go To Florida

If I could go anywhere in the world, it would be Jacksonville, Florida, because everything is so pretty out there and the water is so pure that you could beach and walk around the ground with no shoes on from what I hear, One day I will soon see, and then I will really be able to tell you what it do in Jacksonville, Florida where the sky is always blue and the sun always shine.

-Jamisha U5

From The Beat: We've been to Jacksonville, and we can promise you that the sun does not always shine and the sky is not always blue. Still, it's a nice place to visit. Have you been to any of the beaches around here? They may not be so warm and the water may not be so clear, but they are wonderful places to walk in the sand. And they're free!

I Do Not Know What To Do

I'm supposed to get out next week. I got interviewed today, and going to the group home, and I don't know if I should run or stay because I talk to my sister and she was like, "Come home! I miss you." That made me sad.

What should I do? Should I stay or run?

-Gat U5

From The Beat It really shouldn't be such a hard thing to figure out when it comes to running from problems that will only come back to haunt you later on. Of course you're sad when you think about others that are hurting because of your actions, but think beyond the fist step. If you run, how long do you think it will before you are back in here, and for a longer time? One sign of growing up is to accept the consequences of our actions — including your sister missing you and your sadness over it. It's time for you to be responsible.

When My Life Turned To Black And White

When my life turn to black and white is when my homeboy Chino passed away. It hurt me a whole lot 'cause all I seen was his children eyes. I lost a father figure of the street, and not one day I stop thinking of him...

-DooWop U4

From The Beat: This is another tragic story of death and loss of someone who was much too young to die. When you shed tears for this lost friend, do you think about all those who have paid this terrible and permanent price, and realize that each one of them — whatever "side" or "turf" they claimed — left behind someone like you to carry the sad memory for the rest of your life, left behind mothers who cry for their lost sons, left behind young siblings who will never know their brother or sister? Until we all see that we are connected to each other in this way, this tragedy will continue.

When My Color Turns To Black And White?

When all my colors turn black and white, I am depressed and don't wanna do anything. I wanna stay in my room all day, but that hardly ever happens. Only if a death or something like that happens, then that's when I lose my colors and everything is black and white.

-Jamisha U5

From The Beat: We can certainly understand how experiencing the loss of a loved one would seriously depress anyone. What do you do when you feel like that to get your colors back?

I Want To Go Back To Alabama

I wish I could go back to Alabama. Or maybe Florida. Or how 'bout New York? These places might seem far away, but they seem close to me. I been to them all, and done spent some time in all of them.

I think back to the time I spent there. Did I enjoy it to the fullest? Don't matter. I'ma be gone for a while, but when I get back, I hope to go back to all of them. The only thing that bothers me is the fact that my homie Blinky can't be there with me. Blinky was someone that always went to them places with me. But now I'ma have to make these trips on my own. But I will be with you soon.

RIP Blink, love you homie. Yeah, and free Lazy Bum. I love you ninja. We gone both be home soon, just keep your head up. Time ain't shhh. Don't look at it as you gone another day, look at it like you one day closer to being back.

-Birdman U6

From The Beat: "Time ain't shhh" until you run out of it. And it sounds like you're planning to run out of it when you tell Blinky that you'll be with him soon. Is your life worth so little that you don't care about time as a slave or losing it altogether? What gives value to your life? Why do you even care about going to any of the places you named if life itself is so unimportant?

Leaving The Bay

What's up Beat? Dis yo' boy A.J, and I just had to talk about this trip me and my little brother B.J is about to take so we can get away from all of the bull that's going on out here. I feel if we stay out here in the Bay, we ain't gone do shhh but get into any and everything and end up back in jail.

-Aj U6

From The Beat: This has the beginnings of a good Beat piece, AJ, but why do you put in so little effort — and we know it takes little effort to produce two sentences in an hour's workshop! Where will you go? How will go? When will go? How will you stay out of "any and everything" wherever you touch down, because you can beef everywhere, unless you're looking for something else. What are you looking for? We admire you for wanting to take yourself and your little brother out of the war zone, but we don't admire the lazy way you avoid writing about it.

Never Thought I'd See 18

I just had my 18th birthday. I'm glad I made it to see eighteen. I told everybody that I wasn't going to see eighteen 'cause I was into too much shhh. I got shot three different times. This woke me up to change.

I'm going to get a job, go to college and play football. I also want to go far away to another state. I want to go to Atlanta 'cause I heard it was crackin' over there.

-Fat T U7

From The Beat: We hope you do what you say you're going to do, Fat Thug, because we're tired of seeing you coming back to this place over and over again. Getting a job and an education will pave the way for your future. You never thought you'd reach this age, but you did. Now set your sights on doing what's right and not what's wrong, and you will surprise yourself again by how far you can go.

The Bahamas

I would like to go to the Bahamas and be peaceful and lay on the beach with the honey and enjoy the sun. Try and get on a cruise and enjoy my time there to be away from all the negativity in the city of San Francisco.

-Ant U2

From The Beat: We hope you get your wish. We've never been to the Bahamas, but we've heard it's beautiful. That cruise sounds wonderful too, especially because you get to eat all the time all you want!

Rip Young Neez

Damn Ne-Ne, I never thought it would be you bra. That shhh really got my head screwed up bra. A ninja really down here hurting. I couldn't believe that it was you when I heard you got shot. I was hella mad 'cause I really looked up to you like a big bra.

Now you gone I don't know what to do. This shhh hella shady big bra. That's why I gotta stay on my shhh now. When I get out I'm going to fire up a fat-ass blunt and smoke a black, maybe pop a pill with a bottle, feel me. Rest in peace my ninja Young Neez.

-Lil' Scari U6

From The Beat: We're sorry for your loss, as we find ourselves being sorry for so many losses, but how will smoking a blunt, popping a pill and drinking a bottle allow you to "stay on yo' shhh?" It's like saying that you have to stay on your toes at all times, and you're going to do that by putting every chemical you can think of into your body so that your brain clouds over and reason leaves you. Take a hard look at what you've written. You "never thought it would be" the homie you looked up to as "a big bra" — but it was. He didn't think it would be him, either. But it was. The reality is he is gone forever, except in your memory. Could he have made changes in his life that could have prevented this terrible tragedy? Can you?

Sending A Beat

If I were to send a Beat, I'll send it to somebody I don't know because people you don't know tend to understand you more than one of your closest friends or family member.

-Julian U7

From The Beat: Once again, Julian, you need to explain what you're talking about, and nobody can explain anything in one sentence! How can people you don't know understand you more than people who are close to you? We don't understand.

Why?

What's up Beat? This is the infamous Nick Beam hittin' y'all up again. I wanted you to know I'm still here when I should have been able to go. What I'm trying to say is I need help, or I should say I need God! I need God to answer my prayers and I would do whatever it takes to get the hell out of here.

-Nick Beam U6

From The Beat: Did you ever consider the possibility that you being here is God's answer? Prayers come in more than words. Actions are also a form of prayer, in the sense that God knows, so maybe He is trying to tell you something with this answer. When you say you will do whatever it takes to get out, what happens after you get out? Are you willing to do whatever it takes to stay out of here? What do you imagine that is?

If I Could Send The Beat To Anyone

If I could send The Beat to anyone I want, I would send it to my mom because she like to read, and my bother because he need to see it so he won't come here and do wrong.

-Young Nova U2

From The Beat: If someone had sent you The Beat before you did whatever it was that got you here, would it have prevented you from doing wrong?

Thank God I Didn't Die

One time when everything went white and black was when I was stabbed in my right arm and in my back. That shhh hurts more than getting shot, and I got hit with a shotgun. I thought I was gone die that day 'cause I was just leaning against a walk and I couldn't talk. Then my next-door neighbor came out and saved my life 'cause it happened a block away from my house and 'cause she was a nurse. Thank God I didn't die that day.

-Yung Jokes U6

From The Beat: You write about two experiences where you could have lost your life, and one where you came very close. When you say, "Thank God I didn't die," how far do your thanks to God take you? Are "thanks" nothing more than words? Do you believe you owe God anything for sparing your life, or do you believe in God at all?

Waiting My Rec

Dear Beat,

You know that when you guys come it's part of our two-hour rec for the night. Why don't you guys just have your own room for your program? No offense but this program is boring. Some of us just come out so we can be out of our room. But we would prefer having our full open rec! You feel me?

-Mark One U6

From the Beat: We do feel you, Angel, and if we were in charge we would do it exactly as you suggest. But The Beat is not a part of JJC (YGC). We're only guests here, and as guests, we have to do things the way the administration has set them up for us. We don't want people in the program who don't want to be here or who are bored by us, but it is the institution, and not The Beat, that tells us when to come and where to come. Why don't you make your suggestions (or grievance) to staff. They have all the power. We have none.

Rip Ne-Ne

This Saturday I lost someone who was real close to me. He was one of my close friends, Jamal Smith aka Young Neez. Man, it's real messed up that I'm locked up and won't be able to go to his funeral. Right about now my head is real screwed about all this shhh that is happening around the 'hood while I'm locked up.

-Lil' Scari U6

From The Beat: You are not the first to write about this latest tragedy, Ascari. We are so sorry for the loss of your friend, another child who has paid a price that one can never get back. Of course this messes with your head, but to keep it real, the things "happening around the 'hood" were happening before you got locked up, too. They are happening every day, and every day tears are spilled by loved ones left behind. Is "the cause" worth the cost?

Something Stupid

If I could send a Beat to anyone in the world.... It would be the people in the 'hood. Tell about this is what we do in juvenile, express our feelings and how soft people is nowadays. See, me? I wrote something stupid and it got in, and I drew something and made it too.

-Jason U6

From The Beat: So, you're boasting about writing something stupid? Not too smart!

Iceland

If I wore to go anywhere in the world it would be Iceland because it's far, far from here and I think it will take a lot of me and release me and be better.

-Julian U7

From The Beat: If you read your own words, don't you want to ask a lot more questions of yourself? How do you even know about Iceland? What do you know about it? There are many places that are far, far form here, so why did you pick Iceland. How would going there release you and be better for you? These are the things that make all writing better. Next time, do NOT write about all three topics. Choose only one topic to write about, and write a lot about it. You've written on three different topics, but you've told us almost nothing.

Straight To Philly

In about a day or two. I will be going to live with my dad. I will go and make the best of it. I will finish my little bit of school time and make myself and my family happy. I just want everybody to know.

-Young Kristina U7

From The Beat: We're glad that you have set your goal to finish school and make your family and you happy. But three sentences in one hour of writing tells us that you may not be ready to do what you need to do to achieve this goal. Laziness is not an ingredient for success. There is so much you could have written about your plans, about what it means to you to "make the best of it," about what your family wants of you and how you will make up for letting them down. So much you could have written, but you chose to write three sentences.

If Bundy Could Go Anywhere

What it do Beat? Me, chillin', keepin' it lit hard and grimy for the block, But shhh, what's really good wit' the thugs, 'cause if you know me, I'm shakin' them haters off always, feel me. If you know me, I gets mine, man,

But shhh, if I could go anywhere, I would want to have my own Play Boy mansion sayin' Bundy Manson. I would have my ninja all the baddest females in the world all of them young jeezy would be naked on chains and shhh. Now she off the chain, now she so erotic and have all them caterin' to my needs like it's nothin'. Ninja, I'll have hella money raining from the ceiling, 'cause if you didn't know lil rather get dough. Money is all I think of.

-Al-Bundy U7

From The Beat: You know, Al, when we read a piece like this, it truly makes us sad, for at least two reasons. The first is that some years ago, this unit used to produce the best writing in The Beat — thoughtful pieces, meaningful flows that were angry but which taught us something, deeply moving recollections about hard lives and even harder decisions. This unit used to produce many POWs every single week. Now, if you read everything written in this unit, hardly a word is worth much more than a throw-away thought, a line or two to get The Beat, but which gives nothing back. Take a look... just one piece in the entire unit even rises to the level of a Standout! But we're even sadder when we read a piece like this from someone like you whom we know has the ability to teach, who has experienced many things which we have never experienced, and who has the ability to make us see — but instead chooses to waste time (yours and ours) by clowning, fronting, and generally making a big fat joke of what could be a serious effort. In short, we're disappointed.

Words That Say Nothing

This ya boy Tweety writing to you from JJC San Francisco, yarra mean? They're tryna play me bro! Fo' real. They released all my homies. I think they tryna keep me locked, me But orale vato alraltos.

-Young Tweety U7

From The Beat: We have no idea how "they" are playing you. You haven't told us one reason to believe that they're playing you. We don't know why others would be released while you're still being held. In fact, there is only one things we can learn from this: you are too lazy to write something that takes effort, and therefore, you are playing yourself!

Riding It

What up with it Beat Within? This is your boy D-Boy. Me? I am just in the hall riding it trying to get out this shhh and they is thinking about sending your boy to the CYA. Your boy trying to fight that,

-D-Boy U7

From The Beat: We had to take out your shout outs at the end (not allowed in The Beat). But more than that, this is a very disappointing piece. It tells the readers nothing at all about you. Why shouldn't you go to the Y? You don't explain? What are you doing here at all? You don't tell us. Trying to get out of here, even if you succeed, only gets you out... what then? How do you stay out, or does that concern you? The laziness that this piece reveals (about four sentences in one hour's time) that you're not using your time to think things through, and until you do, you'll just keep finding yourself back in places like this, or worse. Everything worth doing takes effort. You haven't demonstrated you're willing to put in that effort, at least not in The Beat.

Long To Go

This topic is the only one yet I find is the easiest topic to write about, 'cause whoever is locked up has only one goal, and only one. That is to go home to their family.

-Young Meel U7

From The Beat: We can understand why going home would be the most important goal for anyone locked up. But if that is the only goal, how will you hold onto it when it comes? Doesn't keeping your freedom — staying at home with your family — require more than just wishing to be there? What will it take for you to keep yourself from returning?

Longing To Visit Cambodia

Cha, I always wanted to go to Cambodia to speak my language and see my country, and see my grandma 'cause she is sick. And so I could see my cousin over there and just chill. I think if I go there it's going to be fun, sunny, and cool.

-Lil' Kut U5

From The Beat: We visited Cambodia many, many years ago, even before the war came and destroyed so much. It was a very beautiful country with very beautiful people, so we hope you get your wish.

A Mother's Lies

If I never had a family it would be stressful in life because you would not know how it felt to let a parent buy you things. I felt that in life. Like my mom, she was a ghetto person when she was young. She always picked on me when I was lil', but I got older now and she said sorry around September. But she never visit me after that. She lie to me over all these years.

-Whisper U4

From The Beat: This is a very sad feeling to carry around with you, Whisper, and we're sorry you had to experience this in your life. Do you ever wonder what her life was like when she was a child? We're not saying that could excuse her behavior toward you, but maybe it would be easier to understand. What we're trying to say is if you have a child of your own some day, how will you explain to him what led you to getting locked up? What will you want him to understand about your childhood that will make it easier to understand his father?

Where I'm Coming From

If I could send a Beat to anyone in the world, it would be my pops and all fallen soldiers. Because a lot of people are confused and are peer-pressured. So the reason I would write to these people because I would want them to understand where I'm coming from.

-JK U7

From The Beat: You know, JK, if this is an example of what you want people to understand about you, you have done a very poor job of explaining. Instead, you've taken the lazy way out, writing three sentences in one hour that says you want people to understand where you're coming from, but telling us nothing about where that is. Don't those fallen soldiers you want to send The Beat to already know the life you're describing? Wouldn't it be more useful to send The Beat to those who don't know that life?

Beat To Anybody

If I could give a Beat to anybody in the world, I'll give it to my favorite rapper, my ninja Young Jeezy, Let's get it.

Don't ask me why I would give one to him 'cause I don't know. That's just one of the homies ya heard, ha, ha.

But fo' real, I think my ninja Jeezy go harder than everybody. That's right. But man, Bundy 'bout to shake the spot so get back at cha ninja,

-Al-Bundy U7

From The Beat: Oh no, we wouldn't think about asking you why you wrote what you wrote; we wouldn't want to put you out, or force you to think, or ask for anything meaningful. Not at all. We love coming here every Tuesday night to get so little in return. You must be proud of yourself for enlightening us, and for doing so much to prepare yourself for a future free of prison bars. Thank you for thinking so deeply and sharing those deep thoughts with The Beat. We wouldn't want to put any demands on you at all. After all, it's your time and your life!

Beat For The Poor

If I have a choice to send a Beat to anyone, I will send it to every poor person in the world so they think twice about their lives, and so how people can read how people lives are around the world. But if I was a poor person and if I had a Beat, I will be sad that that happen to anybody and change my life around.

-Jb Moneys

From The Beat: We can see where you're going with this, but we wonder if poor people need to read about the lives of other poor people, even though it might make some change their lives around. But wouldn't it be good for rich people to see how some people have to live? Maybe if rich people read The Beat, they might change their lives around to begin helping them.

A Long Way To Go

I got a long way to go with my life. I still can make it in life. I still can change my life around and it don't take that long. That's why it's a long way to go. but it's not that long a way to go for some people.

I know if some people that's goin' die will change they life around, but they say I got too a long way to go. And some people still want to go to school. And that's a long way to go, but still can make it. That's why I say it ain't no long way to go.

-Young Jt U2

From The Beat: The word "long" has two meanings in English. The first is the one you wrote about, like a long distance. But the other meaning is what we were hoping you would write about. To "long" for something means to wish for it very much, to want something to happen very much. For example, some people long to go to Hawaii, but it's too long a trip! In any case, we agree with you that you can change your life to accomplish anything you want to accomplish. So, what do you want to accomplish?

Returning Home

My plans when I get out of LCRS is to be back on the block.

-Dopes

From The Beat: Since, as you write, you intend to go straight back to the block, why, instead of checking off the Ranch, don't you just stay there? At least you'll be safe and so will everybody else.

Traveling

If I could go anywhere on the world, I would go to Vietnam and New Zealand. I wanna go to Vietnam to see my family there, that I never met before. I wanna go to New Zealand, 'cause it looks like a great place for a vacation. I wanna go to Vietnam to try the pho there, too.

-Frank LCRS

From The Beat: We hope you get the chance to go to Vietnam. It's a beautiful country that is finally free from the Chinese, Japanese, French, American and Soviet occupations. Even though it's a poor country, many foreign companies are now investing in it. We hope your family back in Vietnam will be excited to be able to meet you.

Handle Your Time

What it is, Beat? This Young Casper comin' out of Log Cabin Ranch. I just wanted to tell all that are down and out up in the halls doin' they thang, to be easy and knock out yo' time like you supposed to, so you can touch down soon. I should be touchin' down in a couple of months.

-Young Casper LCRS

From The Beat: It's good of you to advise young people in the halls to chill, do their programs so they can go home. What advice would you give them for the outs, so they won't mess up and come back to juvy again? Will you take your own advice, when you touch gown again? We hope so. What is that plan?

Long To Go

Yo, I got a long way to go
I got ten-and-a-half-months left
But it ain't nothin' to me, though
I'm 'bout to get my swole on, ya feel me?
I'm hittin' my weights and eatin' hella food
They treat a ninja right up in LCRS
Right now I'm benchin' one-eighty
That's more than half again of what I weigh
I'm a keep y'all up on my progress
One love

-Young Ant LCRS

From The Beat: It's good to read you're doing well at the Ranch. What's up with your education? Reading? Maybe it's good that you have a "time out" from your life on the outs. We hope all of this will give you a new perspective on your life out there, so you will stay free and strong when you're home again.

Problems Come

Yes I feel like in my life all the primary colors go away because so many problems come into a person's life. It seems that when those problems come, everything seems to just go away, and everything goes black and white.

-Julian U7

From The Beat: We need more than this, Julian. What are the problems you are talking about? What seems to go away when these problems come? How do you deal with these problems? When you write a piece for The Beat, you have to think about all these things. You have to teach us what you mean, so that we can begin to understand what you are going through. You can't do that in two sentences.

Long To Go Home

I want to go home, so I can use the phone. I want to get out, so I can smoke a Newport. I want to go to Vegas, to see what it do. I'm ready to go, I'm ready to go, I'm ready to go.

I'm ready to go college, to get more knowledge. I want to go to Cloud 9, with this one sexy guy. But one day I wanna go to heaven.

-Foxy Mama U5

From The Beat: Don't you think that you are longing to go home for all the wrong reasons? You don't mention wanting to go home to be with family. We can see there's a lot that you want, but what we don't see here is what makes you "ready to go?" Sometimes, what we want is very different from what we need. So again we ask, what makes you "ready to go?"

WALDEN HOUSE PSK

I Tried To Please Her

I tried so many times to please my moms! I was only 11 1/2 when my moms died. It was hella hard. Man, all I could do is say it was all my fault, because I always said to my moms, "I freakin' hate you! I wish you would die!" And a year and a half later, she's up in da hospital, and, bam, she gone.

Don't know what to do, but just say, "Why?" Why? Why did I do wrong?"

-Marie

From The Beat: You are not responsible for your mother's death, Marie, even though you feel guilt for telling her you hated her. She knew you didn't really mean that, because she said it to her mother, and her mother said it to her mother, and, be prepared for your daughter to say it to you, one day. It's something we all go through. The hard thing is losing your mother, and that's hard at whatever age it happens. Whatever the cause of her death, telling her you wished it not wasn't true, even when you said, nor did it have anything to do with it. Forgive yourself so that you can keep the memory and the love of your mother warm in your heart.

Good God

Good God
Have you ever had a feeling of sadness that won't go away?
Good God
Have you ever had a feeling of loneliness that you think will make you insane?
Good God
Have you ever had a feeling of powerlessness that you can't say no?
Good God
Have you ever had a feeling of hurt, that no one can unhurt?
Good God
Have you ever had a feeling of an opportunity to do right?

-LMG

From The Beat: Yes, we have had such feelings. They are part of what it means to be human. Now that you have that opportunity to do right, grab it and hold on!

Long To Go

In my life, before I die, I want to go college, of course. But the one country I am dying to go to is Japan. Ever since I was a little kid, I've wanted to travel, but Japan screams out to me.

Also, I want to go to Burning Man and Reggae on the River. I'm going to eat sushi in Japan and hang out with the hippies at Burning Man! Shaka na-na, bro!

-Sara

From The Beat: We'd love to know what attracts you to Japan and Burning Man, because they are worlds apart (both geographically and spiritually). Japan can seem very buttoned down and uptight, even rigid, while Burning Man... well, we know what Burning Man is about. We hope you get your wish to travel far and wide!

To Grandpa

Mike, I understand
But you can't blame me for lovin' my right hand
We been through a lot together
I just wanna be there 'til we both get better
And I'ma be there, whenever
I know it seems that he digs bigger holes
But I know my boo, and he do got goals
I don't think he will ever stop me from achieving mines
No one will ever know, our love is one of a kind
Roy told me you would probably say
"Love is blind"
But I think I'm smart enough
So my eyes is open wide

-La Donna

From The Beat: Love IS blind, La Donna, but that's not a bad thing. It let's us feel that soaring sense of euphoria that begins all love affairs, whether they turn out to be the love of the century or the love of the moment. We hope this is the former, but if it's the latter, then know that you must keep moving forward, because loving yourself is the most important love of all!

Program

Have you ever been away from home
So long lightweight feel like a lost bone?
Yo' family only remember the bad things
Like pulling them licks
Gangbanging and shhh
Girls hating, calling me names and shhh
Why you hating on me?
Because you can't be me
Yo' man tryna make me his wifey
Look at me! Why you think?
'Cause I'm just so sexy
Tall and thick
That ain't just it
I rap, dance, do poetry
I ain't going dumb
I'm two stepping in my business suite
Yeah, he calling me "Boo"
It's 2-2-07
Eighteen days left 'til I'm gone
Enjoy yourself
My friends in Hayward need to be coo'

-Jazz'ah Belle

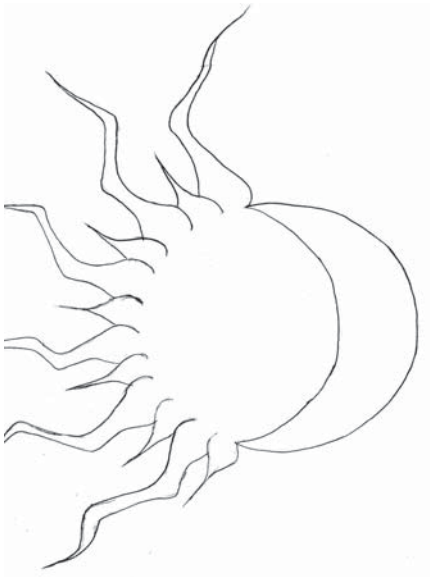
From The Beat: You need to be coo' yourself, Jazz'ah Belle. Stop trying to rep your spot in The Beat. Stop dissing other girls by telling them how much better you are than them. In fact, stop focusing on anyone but yourself. You're the one that's here, and you're the one that has to find a way to move forward with your life. Forget them. Tell us something about you!

I'm Missing My Baby Jimmy

Damn, I'm missing my baby, and right now I'm locked up in juvy and it's making me go crazy. Damn, I should be out there with my baby, not here in juvy. I'm turning 18 soon. Hope I get out on my next court date. I hope I really get out so I can see my baby that I'm missing a lot.

-Crystal

From The Beat: We're sorry that you find yourself in this position. We don't know whether Jimmy is really a baby, or if he's your sweetheart. In either case, you've behaved in a way that has separated you from Jimmy. What are the chances that next time you're tempted to repeat that behavior that you'll stop and remember how much you miss him? If you want to be there for Jimmy, you have to change your behavior.



Poem

You tell me that I must perish
like the flowers that I cherish,
nothing remaining of my name,
nothing remembered of my fame.
But the flowers I've planted still are young.
The songs I sang will still be sung.

-Anonymous Plagiarizer

From The Beat: Here's the deal Mr. Anonymous. These are lyrics by Elizabeth Cutler. We're glad that you appreciate them, but you can't pass other people's work off as your own. That's called plagiarism, which is a special kind of stealing. You can honor the work of others, but you have to give them credit by acknowledging that they wrote it. By the way, you've misquoted the last two lines. But you're close enough.

Job Corp

I'm going to Job Corp soon. I'm happy that I'm leaving. I can't wait. It's in Utah. I can't believe I'm going to Utah. I've never been to anywhere outside of California. There's going to be a lot of Mormons. I can't stand Mormons.

-Kyle

From The Beat: Don't worry about the Mormons. Just be concerned with your own behavior. Work hard and be kind.

What People Say

People talk about you and do not even know you. They look at you and they start talking about you. They don't even know you. Probably those people are worse than you. People look at you, at how you are dressed. You dress like a cholo. They think you are one. But all they are is little winks. I hate people like that.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Don't waste your energy on folks who judge you without knowing you.

Liars

I went to court and they told me I was going to get released. And now they tell me I have to stay here for four years and two months, or go to a group home. Otherwise, they'd send me to CYA and I wouldn't get released until June 1, 2011. I was mad because they lied.

-Frustrated

From The Beat: We suspect there is more to this story than we've been given in your piece. Sounds like a lot of miscommunication. The job now is to figure out what works best for you. Make a decision and stick with it. Things will probably not turn out quite as badly as you've indicated. And by the way, what's your reluctance to go to a group home, if it will get you out of the system sooner?

China

A place I would like to go is China. There are a lot of hot girls there and they have an interesting culture. They have big business and a lot of corporations. They work hard and make a lot of money. While I'm there, I'd like to meet a girl and ask her if she'd like to come to America.

-A

From The Beat: Have you considered that maybe she'd ask you to stay in China. People generally don't like to leave their homes. There are, of course, people who make a career out of traveling. Do you have 'wanderlust'? Do you think you would like to live for extended periods away from your hometown, or your country?

Hawaii Is Where I Would Go

I would want to visit Hawaii, because I've heard that it's a good place and because there are beaches there. I'd like to meet a girl over there and I'd like to learn about her culture. I have an aunt who lives over there and I hear that there's good food over there.

-Hawaii Bound

From The Beat: Some of us who work with The Beat have been to Hawaii. And we can tell you that it is a wonderful place to visit. Pretty expensive, though, because so many people want to be there.

Where I'd Like To Go

I've never been out of California. I would like to go to Texas, Florida, Amsterdam and LA. I want to travel when I turn 18.

-Julian

From The Beat: How will you earn the money to travel? Maybe you should finish your education, and travel later.

She Was Never A Friend

I thought you were my friend. You said you had my back. That was a lie. I was a good friend to you, and you did me wrong. Now I'm paying the price, in here, because of you. Thanks for never being a friend.

-Paola

From The Beat: Wait a minute. Who did the deeds that got you thrown into the hall. Are you sure you're mad at the right person?

MARIN

The Valley Of Incarcerated Soldiers

In the valley of incarcerated soldiers
The walls in my cell
Just seem to get colder
But as I get older
Reality sets in
There's more to life
Than Remy and Heem
Or doin' time in the pen
I've acquired remorse for my sins
I'm sorry for all the things I did
And for all the things I done seen
I'm not a bad person
Only God knows what I mean
And when I'm released
Best believe I'll come clean

-Keys

From The Beat: What does it mean to you to "come clean"? Do you mean that you intend to be responsible for all that you've done, and/or to stay away from Remi and Heem in the future? Both responses would be nice. You sound like to intend to stop sabotaging yourself and your life, so that's all good! It's time for a change. Are you ready for it?

Whatever

I thought how my life was miserable
Thinking and saying my writing is hella pitiful
Came off two dollars the way I was working
Got into the game when I started feeling deserted
I lost my mom' respect; I'm gon' leave it at that
Fresh out the box, now time to relax.

-Jayleon

From The Beat: Are you working on getting your life back on track? Getting the respect you've lost from those who love you? If not, you should be working on it. What's your plan?

I'm sorry for all the things I did
And for all the things I done seen

ALIBI ***Once again, we must start with an apology to one of our most faithful contributors who chooses only to be identified as ALIBI writing from "an undisclosed location deep in the bowels of the system..." ALIBI must be wondering if what he sends to The Beat actually reaches us, since we have fallen months behind in publishing his work. All we can say is, "Keep writing!" In the epic poem, "Devil's Playground" and the epic explanation that follows, "Palabra" (word), this writer urges every reader to free him and herself from the mental prisons of our upbringing, and to recognize that each of us has a choice.***

Palabra

Ladies and gentleman... We are joined here today to mourn the loss of a great figure in our lives... We are gathered here together to say our farewells, our goodbyes... But today let us celebrate the passing of this figure, let us rejoice, for we know that for one thing to end, leaves room for another to begin...

Today... here... Now, let us lay to rest, let us say goodbye... to ignorance!

I am not sure if this seems to be a reality to me only because it is more apparent in the circles I've traveled. But it would seem to me that being ignorant and at times just plain stupid is the "in" thing. The cool thing. It would appear that you're looked down upon if you seek knowledge, if you actually try to better yourself. That if you're not caught up in the whirlpool of ignorance, lies and pollution, then you're just not "with it."

Wow! I don't know about you, but I find that mighty, mighty suspicious. But that would lead us down a whole 'nother path that we're only destined to peek into today.

Hopefully, you have just finished reading the poem or story appropriately entitled "Devil's Playground." And even though it's not a true story, per se, it is not science fiction. It is a "real story" happening to "real people" across this nation of ours.

And even though some parts were metaphorical. even though I used analogies and parables, every verse has great meaning.

Some of you who are reading this have experienced many things that are painted in the "playground." Most have heard of similar stories. I myself am the character portrayed in it.

Oh, you say not? What's that? How can I be that person if I got hit by numerous mini-14 rounds, and bled out, serving a life sentence in prison?

I'll tell you why, and please pay close attention to what I just wrote and what I'm about to write, for you might miss it.

Because like Lazarus, I've been risen from the dead; to be used as an example, to be used as the paint as the strokes in the Master Artist's rendering of a great portrait drawn to convey His paint... His Heart...

I've been meaning to sit down and write this for a while now. And it finally came together, first in the "Playground," and now with these thoughts, this word, that I now share with you. And timing is everything, for if I would've done it any sooner, or, any later, you would not be reading this right now.

And you might not recognize this, but the single act of you actually taking the time to read this means you trying to peek behind the cloak if ignorance you've allowed yourself to be hidden under, and into the light of knowledge.

To many reading this, I am only speaking the same thoughts that you yourself have thought — even though that's probably what they've only been, thoughts.

It's funny because as I write this, a good buddy of mine is either in R&R or in a van on his way to the trolley. For today was his parole date.

I thought long and hard about what type of encouragement to offer him. But being that he's an older gentleman, and has been stuck in this cycle for over 20 years, all I could come up with was to tell him that all I could do was pray for him. And even though I was actually talking about someone else, it could've been for him when I said; "You either live and learn, or you live and burn."

Check it, check it!

I'm like the rich dude that died and went to hell. When I got there, I peeped the big homey Abraham chilling with some other cat across the street.

I holla his way and I ask him: "Yo, yo! Yo, Abraham! Why don't you shoot palabra (a word) to my brothers and let them know that I said it's hot as hell down here!"

And he hollas back, "Chále," (No) "They got Moses and the lil' homies to tell them about the weather. Let them hear from them."

And then I say, "Come on big homie, let me send word. They'll listen to one who got smoked and came back!"

And he says, "If they won't listen to Moses and the lil' homies, what makes you think they'll be persuaded by you?" (Luke 16: 19-31)

The only difference is I'm not rich and "El Cado" has gave me a pass, and let me come back so I could lay it down... It's only up to you if your going to pick it up!

I kinda live by weird philosophy or try to anyway. It's like this; if I was being secretly recorded right now and had the footage played back to me many years down the road, would I like what I seen? It is a whole different perspective when you are looking at things form the outside, or when you look at things in hindsight. And man, what the hell was I thinking?

You've all heard of the term "reverse psychology." Well, trip on how "reversed" some of our psychology has been, or still is.

Have you ever noticed that some people often refer to anyone else not in their lifestyle as weird, lames, or squares? To so-called "homies," anyone who could actually be considered "normal," who try to live normal lives, they're considered squares or lames.

But don't you see the irony in that? You think like that, then you're the lame, not doing nothing for ourselves; repping a block that don't even belong to us, a freaking color, a side, a number. If you don't really see how lame that is, how absurd that is, than you're lame.

Oh, how about this for reverse thinking? This is the one that hits closest to home because it's the one I'm most guilty of (and, in abstract ways, still am). "Loyalties" — being loyal to the homies, to the game, the block, putting them above all, especially our families, our loved ones, our kids, our spouses! But it is them, the homies, that will quickly turn their backs on you.

Listen! I've had many cellies who had "All Day," meaning they had life sentences, anywhere from 157 years with double life to three life sentences, to life without. And not one still reps the block like he did when he got caught up. And not one says, "It was all worth it."

Why do you think that is? Well, where are the so-called homies now? Where are the homies that you were so loyal to that you traded your life for? They're not there putting money on your books. Shhh, not even a freakin' post card.

But here's the kicker: remember the ones you turned your back on, the ones you put your homies in front of? They're the ones still there.

This has to be the icing though.. .trip... trip...

I hope you're getting this. Okay, a lot of the homies have already figured this out, mostly the ones who have been through a lil', seen a lil', but also the few fortunate who see through the smoke screen. They peep the scene and say, "Wait a minute, this ain't kosher. This might not be something I want to invest the rest of my life in." But just because they're in a lil' deep or they care about what people think, they don't want to feel like punks.

But this is the cold reality... You are just a bigger punk for not having the balls and doing what you know in your heart is the right thing. BE A MAN! STAND UP AND BE A MAN!

When I first entered the CDC system in '97, these were the things taught to me by my older "G." He told me first and foremost you do not have to do anything asked of you by anyone. Meaning that if you were asked to go on a mission — to stab or assault someone — you could respectfully deny. He also told me if I stayed away from drugs and politics, I'd be all right, for those two ingredients will bring drama to your diet quicker than Marty Shotheimer ruining the Chargers' playoff hopes.

Well, about two weeks before I paroled from the 180 Degree Program in Salinas Valley back in 2002, we all got a "wila" passed under our doors. It basically said if you're asked to

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participate in something, do not shy away from the task, Stand up and be recognized.

In plain English meaning that if you're asked to go stab another, you better not refuse because then you're going to get a few puncture wounds yourself.

It's ironic because when we're coming up, there's not nobody that can tell us nothing. We make our own rules, do our own thing, are our own men. And that mentality brings us to a place that not only the C/Os tell you what to do, but your own people!

Yeah, let me see you with that "nobody-tells-me-nothing" mentality up in here. That gets your glutes handed to you quicker than a drug addict spending his gate money when he paroles!

Listen, if there's anything among these verbs, nouns, and syllables that you need to put in your pipe and smoke, it's these next ones. As many cards that are stacked against us — poverty, broken homes, addictive personalities, the list goes on and on — they are not an excuse! They should be, and are our REASON!

You lil' homies and homettes want to be bad, want to be tough, strong, sick wit' it. You want to be looked upon as soldiers, warriors. Don't you get it? You are the extreme opposite when you let your situations and circumstances get the best of you. You are weak, slaves, stupid, only because you refuse to listen to advice like this.

You want to be a conqueror; you want to be bad. Then overcome your odds. Lift off the chains of oppression. Rise to the top. STAND UP AND BE RECOGNIZED!

Let me ask you a rhetorical question: if you had a real nice, top-of-the-line car, like a Mercedes, would you put it through a car wash that you know is going to jack that car up?

Your minds, your lives are way more valuable than any car. And you might not know about this car wash called prison, so let me put you up on a lil' something. For many years, our justice system has been run according to the tenets of "Retributive Justice." It basically means that we get punished so viciously that we can hardly function for the rest of our lives. It's a system based on hatred and exile instead of restoration compassion and education.

Some say prison is a business. I don't know enough to make a judgment on that. But I do know the US spends an average of $20,000 per year per inmate. For less than that, we could send all non-violent criminals to college. I know America locks up more of its population than any other industrialized nation. I know that 30 years ago, this nation had fewer than 200,000 prisoners. But today California has nearly that figure. I know there's nearly two million prisoners across the country, and of those two million, 70% are serving time for non-violent offenses.

And I don't know for sure, but I'm willing to bet tomorrow's cookies that of those 70%, many are "transformed" into violent people instead of being "reformed."

ALIBI (CONT.)

Have you ever met people that you can't tell anything to because all they'll say is, "I know. I know." How about your kids? "Hey, get your butt up there and do your homework..."

'I know. I know."

And if you don't know anybody like this, it's because it's you.

There's a difference between stupidity and ignorance. Being ignorant is not knowing, and being stupid is knowing but still doing the stupid thing. Many of us know the difference between right and wrong. Many were brought up around wrong stuff. So then it became normal and acceptable to do the same stuff.

If I'm not mistaken, this era is referred to as the "Information Age." If you don't know, it is not impossible to learn. And if you're the one who's always talking about, "I know, I know," then why don't you apply that knowledge?

Many of us are losing the battle, but one only loses when he admits defeat. I've come to realize that us as human beings tend to do what we want. Whatever it is you say you want and what you really do are often at times different. Some say, "I don't want to go to prison," or "I don't want to be a failure," or "I don't want to be a drug addict." Then why do we choose to be?

For some, it is simple. For those like myself, it is very, very hard. Whatever the case, maybe it is one of great importance because your life, my life, is so very precious!

I have risen from death to tell you, my brothers and sisters, that "It's one take, it's cut." You don't have to have the beliefs I have, but you better believe that when it's all said and done, that's it! It's over. You don't get another shot at it. You can't just slip another quarter in the slot before the time expires.

I am not Moses. I am not a prophet. I am just a humble human being who's been given another chance at it. And I not only "want," but "choose" to use that chance to send you Palabra... It's real.

You need to think about what you want. Do you want to be a warrior, a soldier? Then use the armor of kno3wledge and use it as a weapon against your captors. Do you want to conquer? Then conquer! Do you want to be victorious? Then choose victory!

If you want to be a lame, then that's what you'll choose to be. But you can no longer plead ignorance, because if you didn't know, now you know...

And not doing what's best for you, not "wanting" what's best for you... It's just plain stupid!

Devil's Playground

Caught up in the gang thang, we gang bang...
Put in work!
Bang, bang, clack, clack...
Hit 'em where it hurts!
Talked back, "G"ed up, we play at our own...
Killa Cali, home of the khakis, nickel plate,
And the chrome!
Homegrown, hydro-pron bomb, Swisher Sweets,
We low ride...
Throw gang signs, rep the South, East, The West and the No' side!
It's all we know...
Raised in this concrete habitat!
Never shown... so we run streets staying strapped!
My momma's on crack... my daddy lost his head!
My sister's just a whore... who's after that bread!
Gots a sick habit, she must sustain...
Cocaine, dog food, stuck in her vein!
I tell her she living negative; she cackles: "I'm positive, punk!
Got HIV, Hep-C and syphilis, chump!"
Got four different kids from five different daddies...
Mr. Cloak and Sickle got his eye on one,
I just hope he makes it snappy!
I'm usually cool, calm and collected...
But at night I pray out loud,
Asking the Lord to please take me outta
This Devil's Playground
Still, I'm trying hard to make some cents
So I can gain the world, but mess around and lose a soul...
That ain't the business, but it's the twisted and the usual!
And some might not understand it,
So let me make it as clear as crystal...
All I need is my respect, so my only companion
Is my pistol!

continued on next page

ALIBI (CONT.)

continued from previous page

I gotta get mine, take mine, take my tech nine
Two clips...
Feeling too sick, ruthless, who's this?
Slow down, go around... Stop!
Can you hear the laughter drown? As another casket drops!
Lay low!
Gotta stay low, they know...
Caught wind, from him who drove...
Got cracked, got scared, then told...
No shame, no guilt, no soul!
Got pulled over for a simple DUI...
Now I got him on paper singing a lullaby!
No alibi, locomotive, an accomplish turn state...
It's open and shut, "I smoked him and what"...
Sentenced to my fate!
I knew the mob was tough when I took it,
So I can't complain about the game being crooked!
All there's left for me to do
Is stay strong and stay down...
Graduated with honors, I'm on my way to state now...
And all I got in this world is my word, my balls and my reputation
Never break the first, if you break the second,
I'll leave you bleeding on the pavement...
Plugged into the matrix... the style is ancient...
The rules of engagement is: Do them with hatred...
We're fools in this slave ship!
Blameless, trying hard to be famous!
Aimless, with no heart to feel shameless!
Just found out I've got a baby girl and she's three now...
Wondering if she's going to grow up like me
Gots me going senile!
I chose to be a rider, but all of a sudden,
I'm questioning my goals...
Prison politics ain't no joke, leave you broke,
With a body full of holes!
Still, I dance to the music moving in rhythm
With the tune that's being played...
Being played, being used, dazed and confused,
In this game being played!
Still I'm quick on the caper...
We got him on paper...
In the neck just to make sure...
Too sinful by nature!
Wicked soldier in the land of the lost...
The "cause," just 'cause... he said,
Misled, bloodshed... all part of the cost!
And I got double life, so I can't get a new term,
But a price must be paid, so I'm off to the Bay
With a three-year SHU term!
My soul I starved and my mind is hungry...
I feed the need, then realize something...
Ignorance ain't bliss, the kiss of innocence is stolen...
When we believe in dreams of bling and things
Easily broken...
To obtain knowledge and gain wisdom can be
Considered a virtue...
But lack of obedience and appliance to them,
In the end can really hurt you!
As many differences that divide us,
It's the same hate and love that supplies us
With the fuel needed to urn as one flame!
It's one take, and it's cut!
It's one fate, we're all stuck,
Cursed by the words in his name!
The sly, slick and the wicked,
The sly, slick and the twisted,
Huh! We're al one and the same!
Sentenced to death since birth,
I'm dying to live and vice verse,
No needs to search out one to blame...
It's been pre-ordained since the beginning,
Everything has significance and meaning,
We all have a star role in this play...
Some just go through the motions...
Like unseen streams in the oceans,
I myself choose today to change!
After three years in the SHU, I'm back on the line...
To he same mess I left, only it's the one-eight this time!
And I'm really trying hard and am making
Great strides...
But change comes gradually, and not overnight.
I get a letter and it's addressed from the streets...
It says I'm going to have a chance to meet
My daughter, in about two weeks...
Talk about surprise!
There's no vocabulary in this world that could describe
The feeling I felt inside!
But truth be told, Ebony can't live with Ivory...
So peep the scene, and tell me if you see the irony?
Out on the yard the tension is so thick...
You could cut it with a bone crusher,
Blade, or even an ice pick!
I'm torn between two loyalties, but we can only serve
One Master...
Influence is the weapon used to confuse,
Wielded in both hands by our captor!
And before every storm, there's an eerie,
Such a spooky quiet...
The silence hung like a curtain, a forecast
Of the ensuing riot!
The evil that precludes is enough to make a grown man shiver.
Some say it ain't personal,
I myself beg to differ!
Like two opposing wolf packs attacking,
It's on and cracking...
Stabbin', punching, kickin'
Sticking, bobbin', weavin'...
Just a bunch of heathens,
Led by racial demons!
Big Bertha into the crowd...
Is about as effective as a rebuke to the proud...
And gas canisters ain't workin',
We just throw them back, continue to dance...
All the while the Devil's just smirkin'!

Clack!... Clack, clack!
Ah, nah, this can't really be happenin'...
Clack!... clack!
In the wind, there!... I hear that laugh again!
Clack... clack...
They say in the end your life passes in a flash...
Clack... clack... clack
What I'll miss most is whatever I never had.
Sprawled, with my life leaking out of me...
The look on his face tells me
There wasn't much of my anatomy!
Tow tagged, body bagged,
All for the pride of our enemy...
Sold a dream, never seen,
Hopefully this is the beginning and not the end of me...
Funny, the last thing I should think
As I got hit by those stray rounds...
Is this is not what I meant, oh Lord,
When I said, "take me outta this...
Devil's Playground..."

Valentines Day

A day of love and lust
Passion in every heart
Roses at every door
Candles in every room
Kisses and hugs shared between friends
A day for lovers to share
Happy Valentines Day to those who care

SMAX **We met this young lady at the East Palo Alto Charter School (an elementary/middle school) when we used to do workshops there. She constantly reminds us how much we miss those workshops as she still keeps in touch with one of its facilitators. She's in high school now and going through a whole lot. She struggles to be accepted, which is imperative during your teens because that's the period where you're identifying with many different aspects of life. And it's unfortunate because as you'll see from her writing, she's a true gem — a very intelligent and powerful young woman who's falling victim to the foolishness of some other young men and women. We can't wait until she learns that most of the time if you look for acceptance outside of yourself, you'll usually be disappointed. Someone as special as her would have limitless possibilities if she was content in who she is rather than searching for consolation within others. We have nothing but love for her and her struggle and wish we could wave our hands and take all her pain away. But we can't, she can't even do that, so we'll have to see how these obstacles will influence the growth of such an amazing young lady. Thank you for keeping us posted... We appreciate it...**

It Hurts

It hurts on the inside
Like something eating at my heart
It's painful to know I'm not liked
Don't lie and say it's okay
People don't know that it hurts
It hurts to get told you're loved then have it taken back
It doesn't feel good to cry everyday
To have a headache 24/7
It hurts all over to know no one cares
It hurts, I don't want it to hurt, someone come and take the hurt away
Make the pain stop

Hell On Earth

Take me away, get me out of this hell
White skinned demons in gray suits roam the land
He takes lives at the age of eighteen
Sends babies overseas to get shot or blown up
Devil disguised as a dumb ass
Controls the wealthiest country on earth
He'll take your soul and smoke it for fun
I like my soul
I'm gonna keep it 'til I'm gone
Take me away, get me out of this hell.

Hold On

Hold on in the darkness it'll guide your way
Don't give up, stay strong
Stick it out though the storm
Follow the holy glow straight ahead
Don't look back listen to his heavenly voice
Hold on strong and steady
Don't give up on hope
Just keep going good things are waiting
At the finish line
He knows you can make it
Hold on, don't give up, and don't look back

15

15 years lived in love and pain
Joy and sorrow, fun and games
15 years gone and still more to come
15 best friends, a new one each year
15 flames wait to be blown out in one breathe
Happy 15th

Go Home

Why are you here
Everyday getting under my skin
Eatin' my food drinkin' my drinks
Go home, I'm at mine
So why are you here too
Can't leave my stuff home w/o worryin' 'bout you goin' through it
Usin' my phone
Feet on my bed
Make-up open and dried out
Leave get out and go home
Mess up yo' own stuff
Talk to your own friends
Leave me alone
Leave, get out, and go home!

So Sick

I get so sick of being in the dark
But the dark is where I feel safe it's the only place to hide
I get so sick of hiding what's inside
But what's inside is a me that I don't want to show
But show is what people want
I get so sick of doing what everyone wants
But what I want is for people to like me
I get so sick of always wanting to be liked
But if people like me they won't be mean to me
I get so sick of people being mean
But worrying about other people makes me sick
I get so sick of being sick
But being sick, sad and sorrow are the only emotions I know how to show

Tears

Heavy and big like hail coming down on a house of pain
Wash away the darkness of the yesterdays
Cleanse the soul and drown out the sorrow
Drip, drop, drip, drop — eyes hold so much
The heart can no longer hold on to everything
Must let go and set free the soul
Tears so heavy so heavy clings on 'til...
Drop, splash
Cry your tears of heavy clinging pain

Anonymous Love

Who is this love we hear about
Tall and handsome, kind and cool
The unknown singer kept hidden and out of sight
Why don't we know this boy
Hear of him everyday, yet we don't know him
Told not to talk to him, can't meet him
Goofy but smart, special to your heart
Like a safely kept secret held in the safe of your heart
Who is this anonymous love

WILD BILL BARNES ***This next writer gives us "A True Story," which we really enjoy because it has a great moral message in it. Just like you don't fight fire with fire, you also don't overcome hate with hate. Just because someone is threatening to you doesn't mean you should harm that person. In fact, it's way more effective if you have the chance to do the complete opposite — remain calm without countering those threats with more threats. In the book 'Art Of War,' it says that the best way to win a battle is by not fighting at all if you don't have to. That most of the times wars are won or lost way before the actual fighting takes place. It's mental like a game of chess and that's just what this next great thinker is reiterating... But that's not even his best. He hits us with such a creative piece after that, we had to read it again to make sure we weren't seeing things. George Bush goes to jail (and he probably could for all the things he's done if he were one of us) in this piece and Wild Bill has a conversation with him. A very funny and informative piece that he ends by writing 'to be continued.' The mark of the greatest storytellers, always leave your audience wanting more. We've never read anything like it. He then closes with several poems after that. He's writing from the Marion Correctional Institution in Marion, North Carolina...***

A True Story

"My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and afterwards have nothing more they can do..."
-Jesus
Saint Luke 12:4

In 1959 China invaded Tibet. They were destroying monasteries among other atrocities and one Chinese general was most feared. He was doing things like disemboweling living people. Everyone was terrified.

At one monastery, they heard he was coming. Everyone except one fled for their lives. The most "spiritually advanced" Buddhist monk stayed behind. When the general entered the monastery, the monk went out to face him. The general glared at him, asking, "Do you not know who I am? I'm the man who could slice your guts out without batting an eye..."

The monk looked at him steadily, without fear. He said, "Do you not know who I am? I'm the man who could let you slice my guts out without batting an eye."

After a moment, the general placed his sword upon the ground at the monk's feet, bowed to him, and then left. The monastery, like the monk were left unharmed.

The monk looked at him steadily, without fear. He said, "Do you not know who I am? I'm the man who could let you slice my guts out without batting an eye."

George Goes To Jail

"New fish on the block!" Louie the loanshark shouted.

George W. and " Rummy," looking forlorn, stalked in, carrying their bedrolls. Naturally, all 36 pairs of mostly hard eyes tracked them...

"Yeah, new fish to the bunks," Officer Gutley chuckled mockingly, gesturing to two side by side top bunks. B block had 22 single cells. Eight bunks took up half our dayroom, and slept 16 "extra sardines."

"Mighty long way from Crawford..." someone sneered, causing the about half that "got" it crack up.

But, amazingly, no one much bothered them. We did get a major, much-needed, chuckle from watchin' Rumsfeld tryin' to figure out how to get his old ass up on his bunk. Yet, besides that, and a few unanswered, snide remarks, harassment was minimal.

Perhaps even the most moronic amongst us recognized it would be best to simply let them "Stew in their own Karma" for awhile...

"Ha! Two of yours died! Good. Get 'em outta there..." Georgie-boy exulted. Rolling the dice again, George stared intently, awaiting the outcome. The " bones" made their usual hard-edged clanking sound. "Ha-ha! Two more gone... Good! Okay, I'm gonna attack Western Australia now..."

"I told them it wouldn't be a good idea to let George play Risk..." I whispered to my good friend Snake, who was sitting beside me. He laughed a little. Snake was a big biker, with colorful "sleeve" tattoos and a ZZ Top beard.

"Yeah, he does tend to got that 'look' in his eyes, doesn't he?" Snake agreed with a chuckle.

George, naturally, had "ciliqued up" soon after arrival. He hung out with some young guys who liked to play board games. Hell, despite bein' in jail, George probably hadn't had as much fun since his skull and bones days back at Yale... but, I'll tell what, that " gleam" he'd get in his eyes, especially during Risk, was disturbing...

Well, time passed, slowly, as it always tends to do in the pen. Rumsfeld wound up getting "shipped" to another camp after "Crazy Ken" got it in his head that he was "really in for cheerleading," although everyone knew he wasn't, and shanked the poor ol' dude.

Gradually, I got to know George a little. One sunny day, out on the yard, I introduced myself and shook his hand. Despite myself, I did get a bit of a "charge" out of it. For, despite his disgrace, the man had, once upon a time, been "Leader of the Free World..."

Taking a seat on the grass, our backs propped against the warm cement wall of a dorm, we talked for awhile.

"Yeah, Bill, you know what, I sure never thought it'd come to this..." he said sadly.

"Well, George, once your approval rating dipped below 10%-well, you might as well known somebody was goin' to get you at that point... After all, you had left a lot of loose ends layin' around..."

"What, exactly, are you referring to?" he asked, a bit defensively.

"C'mon now, George: "De Nile ain't just a long river in Africa, you know..."

"Perhaps you should be more specific"

"Ooo-kay... How's this? it don't rain in Indianapolis and Niger doesn't sell little radioactive apples..." I sang. George sighed, hanging his head down a little. "And then it was Saddam was a 9/11 co-conspirator or something. C'mon, George, you were changing reasons for goin' in more often than most convicts change their shorts..."

George W. just stared out into space for a while. Then, to my mild astonishment, he started crying. (And, boy-howdy, I just didn't know what in the hell to do then...)

"Yes, yes, you're right, it was all a scam. I was mad about ol' Saddam tryin' to hit my daddy. And then I, even though I was the president, I let Cheney tell me what to do. Halliburton got a windfall. All kinds of other corporations profited as well... and now, I lay in my bunk at night, stare up at the ceiling, and I don't wanna go to sleep. 'Cause, when I go to sleep, I have dreams. Bad dreams. Soldiers with no arms — all scarred up — and little girls with no legs, and when I wake up, about ready to scream, I realize it was all for profit. To benefit the oil companies and the defense contract, contractors, that's all it was... and I'm the one responsible for all the carnage. Guess I was just a frat-boy who got in over his head and got led around, I guess..."

George buried his head in his arms, against his kness, sobbing loudly. I looked around, embarrassed for him, more than a few people were giving us strange stares... [to be continued...]

Children

lord, help me till the fields
of some fertile land
help me raise a bounty
guided by your loving hand...

let sunshine bring forth
the seeds that I sow
let the heavens open
to help them grow...

help them develop roots
that will hold them firm
even when assaulted by
the evil one..

whisper some words of wisdom
into their precious ears
to guide them thru'
this valley of heartaches
and tears...

protect them from the storms
that pass overhead
let nothing harmful
upon them tread...

let your dear angels guide them
thru' this world torn by strife
as they march onwards
towards eternal life...

lord, I worry so much, I know
perhaps more than I should
about all the dangers facing
them in world
that is still, basically, good...

so, in the end
I know, lord
All I can really do
Is just trust them to
The loving providence
Provided by you...

whisper some words of wisdom
into their precious ears
to guide them thru'
this valley of heartaches
and tears...

Rich Harvest

lord, help me bring forth
a rich harvest
dedicated to you...

help me remember
to remain faithful
in all that I do...

help me stand firm
on a solid foundation
of goodness and truth...

yes, help me reap a
rich harvest
and put it to a
good use...

WILD BILL BARNES (CONT.)

Oh Daddy

when I see the crows a flyin'
cutting across the sky
a knife slices thru' my heart
as I remember the day you died...

why did you have to leave me
just when I needed you most?
Why the premature journey
To see the father, son and holy ghost...?

Couldn't you have stayed on
if only for a little while...?
Found a few more joys,
Shared a few more smiles...

Oh, daddy, oh, daddy,
I do miss you so...
And my heart forever aches,
Wondering why you had to go...
For my "great dad" John Edward Barnes

In Perfect Peace

lord, keep my heart
in perfect peace
let all my fears
be released...

let me trust in you
and you alone
until I return
to my heavenly home...

lord, when I'm troubled
keep my heart still
just help me trust
in your perfect will...

let the day break
be my call-to-arms
trusting you'll keep me safe
from all earthly harm...

let me go forth
to show your love
with radiant beams
sent straight from above...

lord, grant me this
and I'll do my best
and will consider myself
truly blessed...

let the day break
be my call-to-arms
trusting you'll keep me safe
from all earthly harm...

JORDAN MC DAFFY ***We had this next writer in our workshops in Hillcrest (San Mateo County Juvenile Hall) before he moved on to the California Youth Authority. He writes a letter letting all the youngsters know how the Youth Authority is and we don't think he could've described it better than when he said, "I departed Hillcrest with a bit of excitement because I thought, Man, I am finally leaving that daycare center, but as two hours rolled by and I was now arriving at Preston (CYA) I was taking back everything I said." It's a reality check arriving at something as massive and dark as a Youth Authority institution, especially if you're not prepared for it mentally. Which is why we appreciate his descriptions of YA because it informs people who are on their way there. He closes by saying he'll write again if we want him to. And our response to that is, "Of course we want you to, that's what we're here for." However, we don't want to pressure you to write either. If there are priorities that are taking time away from writing us, we totally understand, but we'd like to be updated every now and then. And to answer what you've inquired about — the 'new' Hillcrest is up and running. In many ways it's more like a prison with electronic eyes on you everywhere, tiered cells as if preparing you for prison. But the school setting, which is separate from the tiers is much better. But the most important ingredient is the mind set of the probation department that runs it hasn't changed one bit. We hope that was enough information to keep you satisfied, but if not, let us know. And please at least keep us updated, we cherish your words...***

Dear Beat

Hey everyone, long time no see or hear, unfortunately I am at California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (no longer California Youth Authority). So for all you youngsters out there, the adult prison system department now runs the new YA and they do still have the juvenile facilities but they are passing law and making provisions where it is easier and easier to get sent to one of California's adult prison facilities, i.e. Folsom, San Quentin, Chino, Mule Creek, etc... really, it's no joke, unless you got a lot of spare time on your hands just to waste.

And for all you gangbangers, I can certainly feel where you all may be coming from, but after a certain point there are no more rivals, no more enemies. So unless you know your life purpose and you think that you are supposed to ride 'till you die then go ahead and do so, nobody's going to stop you from fulfilling your dreams or your future but just know that getting a job out there really is not that hard, nor is finding a place to stay (well California might be a little difficult, but every other state but Cali).

I was formerly at San Mateo County Juvenile Hall, "Hillcrest." When I was leaving for CYA in Jan '06, they almost had the new facility built and everything so I am guessing they are using the new facility currently. Someone ought to tell me how it is over there now.

Man I can remember being there like it was yesterday, and I can remember sitting in some conference room with some Beat employees named Merv and I think a guy named Matt and I remember Mr. Johnson, my old teacher over there, I think everyone from my little group ended up at one of the CYA institutions, it's really unfortunate how so many youth get sentenced to the Y. This place used to be crazy, absolute craziness but I guess a lot of that has changed since then.

You can buy canteen here — things like Ramen noodles, pastries, sodas, hygiene products, but that ain't no reason to come here. So no more night snacks, no more seeing your parents because most of the locations are in isolated areas. I departed Hillcrest with a bit of excitement because I thought, "Man, I am finally leaving that daycare center," but as 2 hours rolled by and I was now arriving at Preston I was taking back everything I said. Hey don't be scary because if you are a good fighter and you are intelligent and respectful than you really got nothing to worry about except all the time you gotta do, no place of incarceration should be fun enough for you to sacrifice your freedom, but I know how all you might be feeling. Oh how jail can become so comfortable and how it can become something that cats get used to. Especially if the food is good and yo' partners or your homies there with you.

Some places are even co-ed like Hillcrest used to be. But real talk, CYA is in a totally different league, a lot more serious, I've heard of people recidivating a lot that get out of YA but for all you youngstas who've come back to juvi like 10 or 12 times that kinda stuff ain't going to ride here. It only gets more depressing as you go deeper and deeper into the system. It all begins wit' police pointing fingers at you, shaking their heads then they want to add your name in their computer and call yo' pop's. Next you find yourself booked into juvi for your first offense or maybe even your 15th. From there you most likely only have a few options if you below 18: Preston O.H. Close, Rites Of Passage or maybe even an intense group home, but I keep seeing people get sent down south to YTS or De Witt, it ain't cool mayne.

Basically be cool youngstas, leave yo' homies and get a real life for yourselves, I always hear of people complaining that getting a job is too hard, or staying out of the streets is impossible, those are all excuses and lies not to put in an effort towards doing something positive. But there are a lot of things you can do, so read up and research your options and you might find that there's more than just four white walls.

All right Beat, thanks for reading this. I never thought I'd write again, it just never crossed my mind. I'm doing so many other things that writing you guys was seriously out of my mind but here I am doing just that so I hope this finds you well. I might write again if you want me to. Take care and god bless.

SUICIDE ***The real power of The Beat Within is not that we publish writings from the inside and beyond. The real power of The Beat is that we're able to dialogue through paper. We document our conversations, our lessons, our teachings, and most importantly our beliefs and identity. Several issues ago we wondered what the meaning behind Suicide's name was. We assumed he was talking about actual suicide and wondered if he was demonstrating such a tragedy to our mainly youthful readers. This week he clears the air and makes why he deemed himself Suicide more transparent for us. And now we realize that we passed judgment and we apologize for that. We just have a responsibility to the population we work with to try our hardest to put positive messages out there. Especially in a mostly adult section like The Beat Without. So again, we're relieved that he cleared the air for us. He's writing from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA.***

Love Is Key

I named myself Suicide as an allegory of my struggle to kill my ego. Why kill my ego? Because unless I sacrifice my ego I will fail to exercise those virtues which serve the common good. After much trial and error I've come to realize that a rich life is not predicated on material possessions. Rather, the quality of life is based on one's level of spirituality. The bottom-line is this: God is life and love. Never are we more at peace with our self and others than when we exercise the virtues of love (i.e., kindness, charity, patience, sacrifice, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, etc.). Many of us shun such ideas because we dread the prospect of being vulnerable. But this fear, however, is ignorant and even irrational, despite the relativistic attitude of today, you have one of two choices: life (love) and death (hate). As it says in the sacred scriptures:

"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life... that you may love the lord your God, that you may obey his voice, and that you may cling to him, for he is your life and the length of your days."

Frankly, it is stupid to assume that selfishness, anger, bitterness, vengeance, deception, materialism, and other such sentiments and practices will enhance ones quality of life. The key to a good life is faith in love!

When I say 'Love' I'm not necessarily talking about emotional love; I'm talking about moral love. I'm talking about good values and principles, which produce integrity.

I will conclude with the words of Vatican council: "for if man exists, it is because God has created him through Love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator."

You Already Know This

I don't know how to explain it in so many words.
What I write is not something you've never heard.
You probably think it when you sleep at night.
So what can I say that can steer you right.
Words are meaningless guides to those that don't care
So what more can I share.
You can flip through The Beat and read every word
But to the tough ones the words go unheard.
Read The Beat and know despair.
They're all the same in sharing pain.
The loss is the cost but do you care.
To care is to have honor and respect for lives
But how can you respect when you are not respected.
It's a choice to do it and not because you get it,
But because you've earned it.
Nothing isn't worked for.
Even crime is a job of its own design.
Men are looked at by what they do.
To work for crime you'll be despised.
But to care with honor the respect will rise.
But you already know this in your heart.
Maybe it's fear that keeps you apart.
But you will never know until it is done.
Or do you know already...?

Time Aged Fine

Time ages on like fine wine making my spirits stronger everyday,
Hear other men claim to take their lives if they got life,
They're still here because of fear.
I guess they're not ready for the maker.
And for all they gave, not one damn thing,
They feel the system's a taker.
Hypocrites of the blind eye
Can't face the truth it remains aloof, in a cloud of neglect.
They look but can't see.
They broke, chose and did go against the laws of this country.
But denial is still strong in the realms of ignorance.
I grow from what I see, hear, do, say everyday
I learn from all that goes on in this zoo
I have life and I'm alive not dead like most
They've given up because they have no guide
No light, no teacher, no guard against chaos
They act like friends but the slightest thing offends
It's like walking on eggshells, no flower petals
Eventually the mundane B.S comes your way
And you think is today the day.
The day some asshole wants to become a man known for deadly deeds. So everyday I say and mentally pray for strength
And everyday, day by day to the next day,
This spirit of mine ages like fine wine.

JEREMY TOWNER ***It's about time... We've been waiting for this next writer, who we first met in Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall many years ago, to give us something new. He always knocks us off our feet, and though we don't feel like these next pieces are his best stuff, they're still great ideas expressed beautifully. He takes on the topic of time in his first piece where he points out how time can mentally break a person. But for him, time is only making him stronger as he grows every day regardless of what the outcome is going to be. Great piece... Then he goes on to talk about spirituality in his second piece where he breaks down the history of sin. And in his concluding poem, our personal favorite, he goes on to say things you already know, but he does so in a way that suggests you don't really know, you just think you do. We liked it because he's calling out to those that don't really read The Beat. They look into it, but they don't really read into what these incredible young people are writing. Well, Jeremy does because he's just as incredible. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA.***

You can flip through The Beat and read every word
But to the tough ones the words go unheard.

Original Sin

The first sin of Adam and Eve would sentence a fate to their seed. That's us. The first sin was refusing God and his ways.
So easily swayed to be like God.
To have the power to know good and evil.
To decide for them what was knowledge.
All other sins came from, this first one.
Poor Abel didn't have a chance against Cain.
And it slowly, yet gaining speed, spread from there.
Even unto this day we refuse God because we assume he doesn't exist. Who tells us this?
Man? What does man know but original sin?
Sure he has knowledge of the world but what of the world after.
For a man to say that God does not exist
He has to know everything that there is to know
About every single thing that exists to man's finding that it exists.
To assume that God does not exist is just plain foolishness.
When a being is born he is made of flesh
And at the first breath he receives the breath of life.
Three things the body needs to live.
Food, water and air.
Three things the spirit needs are God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
We have gotten so wrapped up in original sin we starved our souls.
We thought that it is the flesh that needs to live
But without spirit what good is the temple of God.
God is in us patiently waiting to feed our souls with the light of life. Don't refuse God but instead give him a chance
To show you what he can do.

KEVIN LONG ***Kevin wrote for The Beat Within for a period of over a year with the "150 Crew" in Alameda County Juvenile Hall. Several times he earned Piece Of The Week status. We watched him mature dramatically as a thinker and a human being during that period of time, and we are pleased to welcome his report from Herman G. Stark Youth Correctional Facility. For most of our readers, much mystery surrounds the experience of serving time in CYA — here's one more story of how it is for one more young man writing The Beat from "the Y". Thanks Kev.***

Life In Herman G Stark Youth Correctional Facility, Part One

Life in HGSYCF is like... so-so. I live in a cell that's nine feet by six feet. In it is a bed, a toilet with sink and a desk. The desk is very small.

Rec' at HGSYCF is usually watching TV or playing games, cards and ping pong. Outside rec' usually happens everyday. Handball is a very big thing here, and a lot of people here love handball.

School here is okay. The food here sucks. I get a hot breakfast. Lunch is usually cold. It usually contains two baloney slices, one slice of cheese, four slices of bread, one piece of fruit, pretzels, and either a cookie or graham crackers. Dinner is usually lukewarm. If you wanna survive, you're going to eat lots of Top Ramen.

HGSYCF is located in Chino, California. It is in the middle of nowhere. It is set on at least one hundred acres of land. [To be continued.]

JAIME ESTRADA *Writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA, we give you this deep thinker and talented writer. This week, and like always, he drops many great poems on us, giving us his perspective on things. And his perspective is one that takes many angles. From letting a woman know how she most go about slaying her dragons, a great metaphor, to writing about a letter he got from his brother, this man truly keeps it honest with us. We enjoy him for it. In fact, we think 'Dear Brother' is the perfect depiction of the hardships that go on while incarcerated. Most people out here automatically think of the physical pains you must have to endure while in jail, but the emotional and spiritual effects of being locked up are way more detrimental. He illustrates this idea in that poem with a talent and a way of looking at things that's extremely unique and yet we know people will feel it. Thank you for sharing such a big part of yourself. We're glad we're getting to know who you are...*

Dear Brother

In 2003 I received a letter
I hold it real tight in my hand really wanting to know
Sketchy to read it, since the context was unknown.
"Dear brother"
I write to let you know, our father was murdered a few months ago.
I'm sorry for not writing any sooner, 'till now.
Didn't know what to say.
Since there is not much you can do.
I'm enclosing a newspaper clipping,
You can see with your own eyes.
How they slit his throat, from side to side.

I had to stop reading to compose my self.
Its terrible news to get through mail
A tear started to leave my eye.
But with my pride I couldn't let my cellie see my cry.
Tell me Lord do you punish me for my past?
I knew the good times couldn't last.
But what could I expect,
If I was born with a rope around my neck,
He wasn't much of a father,
He was more of a friend that I cannot understand.
He did not do much for us.
You could say he put us through hell,
And my mother through many tears as well.

But even knowing his mistake, I still didn't care
Father, friend or foe, he still deserved to grow old.
I feel the world on my shoulders and I must let it out.
But by telling you how I feel, does not make me weak.
Rather put it on paper than cry myself to sleep.
People out there go on with their lives without care for me.
Without realizing one day I'll walk away free.
I am as strong as I can be, I never needed anyone to give me a hand.
So I will walk across hot sand in the desert heat.
Before I let any one break me.
Don't think I don't know what you're trying to hide.
I have honor I'll never betray my own blood.
You know what I'm saying.
You know who you are.
Don't act like you don't.
It may rub you wrong.
But it is the right song.
I said my piece, I feel so much better, this poem is too long,
It's more of a letter, so I'll put this to rest.
As I wait for death to come for me next.

I feel the world on my shoulders
and I must let it out.
But by telling you how I feel,
does not make me weak.
Rather put it on paper than cry my self to sleep.

Dragon Slayer

Emotions run through my brain as I think of a life of pain.
But what is it that holds me together?
If my family is slowly leaving me forever.
There is nothing worse than betrayal,
Knowing how life is so frail,
But coming from your own blood,
Is like a dagger straight through the heart.
Is not blood thicker than water?
You rebel, because you grew up without a father?
Or because there wasn't much love coming from your mother,
I do understand the pain,
The hurtful tears pouring down like rain,
But you're not a kid any more,
You're a grown woman with kids of your own.
But yet, you have let them go,
Is it monkey did, monkey do?
Let them suffer the same way as you?
Does the chase of the dragon fulfill you?
Knowing one day it will kill you!
We choose a path of our own,
But being on the chase, you wont reach to grow old.
It hurts me to see you like this
Not being able to hug you or give you a kiss.
So snap out of it and get up from the floor.
You want to rest in peace?
You will. If you don't stop chasing the beast.
So I'll end this piece saying something better.
It's time for you to get your shhh together...

War

Born in the promised land and raised among men of courage. Fortunate, I consider myself to have the blood I have running through my veins and to possess an inherited heart of great ancient warriors tills myself with pride. I have chosen to live this honorable life, a life where my ways revive my roots, where my actions show my loyalty.

And where my word assures my righteousness, a warrior that is what I have become, a young man that from past experiences in conjunction with the aid of those who I hold reverence in my heart, I have assimilated the justification of my acts and from the true convictions of my beliefs I obtain the desire to advance and grow to expand the dominions of my cause.

So here I stand on solid ground (proud) and stout, always embellishing myself with good qualities, eliminating the ignorance that we all posses in the mind, but what is more important, is to keep my existence in this life, to keep striving, fighting consistently for progress, and my cause, an inherited Mexican warrior, That's who I am...

A Prisoners Eyes

The gloom attacks the light.
Like a living breathing thing.
Monstrous shadows made of time
Is what confinement brings.

Repetition perverts the days
Into a rare but constant pain.
My soul screams for mercy,
From the cage inside my brain.

The walls are harsh impediments
Out of which the nightmare rise.
Crushing hope to death.
In orbs of promised prisoner's eyes

Wisdom

The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. One must strive with confidence in his own belief and abilities to succeed, we find in the greatness of our past, courage and confidence, in our future, just as a single wave is powered by the ocean, a sincere mind has vast resources at its command. The roads to the future and never ending and its path we choose that will determine the course of our actions. T h r o u g h strife all things arise and pass away focus on your surroundings and look closely with great caution, and utilize these observations, along with past experience and good judgment you need to study the people you hang with and notice reactions of a different nature. Part ways from these certain individuals who live content with their overly exaggerated and phony existence. To do this, turn away with sincere devotion to one's principles, let little things remain little in your mind. So you could exercise your mind with bigger and better things. Never look up to others. As we all sit and shhh alike, give every man an ear, but few a voice, always take a little but leave a lot.

It's not what you give that counts but how you give it. If you know, you teach, when you teach, you lead and when you lead, you lead righteously. It's not the size of a man that counts. But the size of his heart, to fight to survive, results count, not efforts. Let silence be your strength and take deep breaths of humility, never to inhale the poisons of ignorance, when the time arises like a lion I will attack, with only deadly intentions.

My tongue should remain dormant. Only to be awaken by swords of wisdom, that may accept it with winds of knowledge, I will create powerful storms to topple structures of improvement. A craving that will remain insatiable, like an infant I will crawl to speak. Like a falcon I will fly to listen and in the end, when my heart will beat no more, I will know that I lived a life of a warrior...

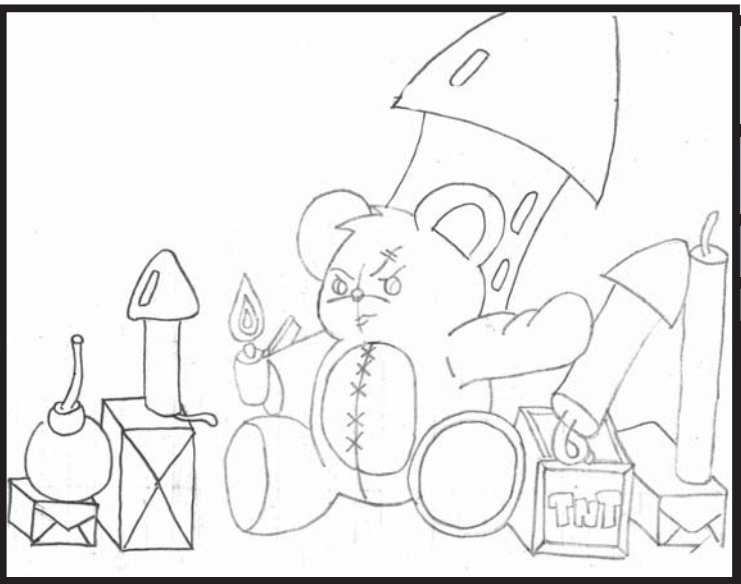
We all possess the power of will, we only have to take the first step. And leave behind our ignorant mind. You are, what you put in it. And will stay behind, only if you choose to.

Puro amor y cariño mi gente

Days Of Thunder

Dark days, games of death
We slowly start losing our breath
Consequences to the game
Playing Russian Roulette
Too many players losing their heads
But what a price!
As some kick back, enjoying a snack.
Must be nice!
But that ain't me,
Caught up in the web, won't ever be free,
Searching the way to not become the next prey
As death becomes thee
Envision the life of the strife
Dark day, feeling myself through the rain
Violence is running through my brain
This shhh is whack
Like stuck on stupid smoking crack.
Cotton mouth what a drought,
Feeling messed up knowing this shhh don't stop.
Russian Roulette
The gun pointed to my head.
Waiting for death to come next.
Dark days, days of thunder, no snacks.
Only hunger, as I keep slowly going under and under...

JAIME ESTRADA (CONT.)



What's Up Familia

I hope to catch you chilaxin, even if they try to keep us locked in box, keep your head up, young bucks and let your mind break through them walls.

Alright then, I would like to ask a minute of your valuable time, to respond and enlighten the young mind of lil' bro, "writing positive" 150 Crew in The Beats volume (11.46) are we hypocrites?

Young mind, I think you got the facts all twisted you're a lil confused and your driving force is anger, but I respect your point of view since we all experience life in different shadows. But let's keep it real, since you opened the page, most let the homies dictate your actions, decisions, (peer pressure) you may not know its going on. But analyze your life and you will realize it's true. And even if you know it you keep going back to it. You go back to what you know. Looking for validation within your homies, so they could say your down! You get pulled back in again, how is that for a change?

Then you write about, how people only write about change when they get busted! Listen! "isolation" makes the mind rewind and see clearly of life's mistakes, when times get hard. Do we not turn to (God) in one way or another? But when things get better, we forget our goal, its human nature to attack when we feel threatened and love when we feel safe we all express our emotions someway, we write, or cry or rebel. If I take time to enlighten you, young minds it's because even if I can't go back I could teach you a way of life, that it's better and if you decide you're hard enough to hang with the big boys I hope you meet someone who will guide you in the best path there are. Some words that convicts use and it goes. (I ain't no babysitter) so when times get rough, you have only yourself to count on.

Where's your homies in here? They forget about you, a soon as you get locked up. That's why I wrote that piece "Forgotten" another soldier will take your place so let's keep it real, young minds, you won't know what your made of until you're in hot water. You need to understand for every action, there's a reaction. You better start thinking of #1 "you" one wrong (yes) then your writing to The Beat. Saying how you crave for a change to only be back at it, when you get out. To be forgotten again, so I want to let you know, "If you keep wolfing" you gonna find the (one) who's gonna call you out. You gonna have to show what you're about were all peas in a pot. But can you stand the boiling water? Welcome to my house, young minds. This poison bullet is out with a bing, bing and a bang! Bang! I hope you understand my pieces (wisdom), (war) I don't preach, I teach!

MICHAEL MCKINNEY

Reflecting on the past is common when people get locked up. A lot of times many regrets, guilt, and shame come up when we reflect on the lives we had before getting incarcerated. This next writer is reflecting on his own life in his first poem, "Keep It Real" and he's come up with a lot new appreciation for things because he realizes exactly what he's missing now. In his second poem he makes a call out to the community to come together and educate one another. A great message from an equally great writer... He's writing from a Florida State Prison in Raiford, Florida...

I was headed in all the ways of self destruction
with no direction
Feeling as if the world was against me with no protection

Community

Where is the unity in the community,
Coming together is the community call
Stand for each other as God stand for us all.
Building a community that will never fall
Standing on a solid foundation to hold us all
So come near for the community call
The community must stay together
Being there for one another through the hardest weather
A community that pray together will forever stay together
A community that study together will learn together.
And share the knowledge that they have learned
To help raise up the up coming generation,
So they would no how to keep the unity among they own community.
In your community when one fall
The others must be there to show they care and lift them back up
And help them get they feet out the sand.

Keep It Real

Looking back in the years,
Trying to keep count of all my tears
They are more then I can count, tears of hurt, tears of shame
So much water unto my eyes look like they have been in the rain
But from these tears my heart feels so much pain,
Of knowing all the people I have hurt,
Some time make me feel like going insane.
'Cause it is not in my heart
To bring my hurts in the life of the ones I love.
But my heart and life was not in the right direction from up above, When my mother, brother and sister always stood by me
With all they concern knowing in my life I still had a lot to learn.
I was headed in all the ways of self destruction with no direction
Feeling as if the world was against me with no protection
I felt unloved when I was loved by so many
And cared by so many others, but my fears insecurity.
And full of so much anger
Kept me at war with people feeling like a stranger
Trusting no one to open up to.
My mind was always troubled,
My heart was always troubled many fears of looking inside myself.
And making the changes in my life that need to be made
But I was in fear of making them changes
'Cause I thought I would miss out on something
Such as the things that kept me going down hill
That kept me at war with my self not giving myself a chance
To live up right and be of my true nature.

CHRIS GRAJEDA

We remember a time when we took three of our Beat colleagues who've been in jail and are now workshop facilitators up to Alameda County Juvenile Hall with the founder of The Beat, David Inocencio. We went to talk to the max unit up there where one of our favorite people (not just writers), Chris Grajeda was housed at the time. We recall how he challenged one of our colleagues who had made a decision to get out of the gangs before he got out of jail. When our colleague talked, Chris gave sighs of boredom, rolled his eyes, and even said things under his breath. We could tell that Chris wasn't feeling him because he felt like he wasn't being loyal to what Chris thought he was going to be loyal to for a long time. Now, with a little bit of experience on how gangs aren't loyal to the individual, but expect the individual to be loyal to it, Chris is growing in his thinking one step at a time. It's evident with these two sentences, "All this gang B-S it has died over the years. Gangs are just a front for people that are scared to face life alone, it's for one who needs help to carry on with life or they just want to feel 'a part' of something." We've always adored Chris even when he would challenge our ways of thinking by sharing an opposing view. We still adore Chris and admire the ways in which he starting to question the lifestyle that got him where he is today. He's writing from the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA, and we hope he continues on his journey to a path that doesn't mirror the one he took before. We know he can do it... He's a soldier in every way possible...

Prison Cell Thinkin'

I feel that I been forgotten, but by whom I must ask is it my family? Friends? Close homies? Lover? Or is it by God? I sit in my prison cell just pondering about life in general. I feel left out yes, I said 'left out' but left out of what I don't know. I've already been robbed of my childhood by foolish acts I brought on myself. Well, it wasn't all on me I could say I have been deeply misguided from the start. I was influenced by gangs, drugs, money and peer pressure from an early age. I never had both parents at the house at the same time when I was younger, one was either in prison or on drugs and deeply in a trance. But although I was very, very fortunate I did have a loving grandmother who was my life (R.I.P. Elsie 'Nan' Thompson) she guided me the best she could when she was alive. I love her so for it too!

Yes, I must admit she was the very thing I lived for in life, she still is the very person that pushes me to strive every day. But as I said before, I sit here in my prison cell locked up and slammed down in the 'hole.' I have got into some serious trouble lately for some, yet again foolish acts I committed under my so-called 'pride.' I'm just wonderin' when am I going to straighten up my act and do what it takes to be a free and productive man? When am I going to quit hurting people I love by slowly throwing my life away? I know by being locked up it does not only affect me, it affects my family, my friends (Well the ones that care that is) it affects my lover who I call my wife... Hell, it even affects 'The Beat Within.' The Beat has followed me through my incarceration since I was just a young pup. They genuinely care for I know that for a fact, or they wouldn't have pursued me to do right all these years que-no? But yeah, in this prison cell it ain't no joke... Real life pedo. The people here that don't give a lick-a-damn about you especially your homies if anything your homies don't want you to get out of this place they want you to stay here and keep them company. All this gang BS it has died over the years. Gangs are just a front for people that are scared to face life alone, it's for one who needs help to carry on with life or they just want to feel 'a part' of something.

Well, my advice for you young folks if you want to be a part of something be a part of college or get into politics on the outside so you could help change this demented ass world. Don't set your goals to come to prison but to succeed in life. Don't end up like me in a boxed in cage stuck like a duck feeling forgotten. This prison life ain't no joke. It can make you or break you, best believe that lil' homies. Keep your heads up I'm gone. Alratos vatos. Lil' Chris from San Leandro is gone and out. Thank you Beat I still love y'all.

KEVIN MOORE ***Some of the greatest ideas come from being curious and wondering about things. If we're motivated enough to pursue our curiosities further, we acquire the potential to learn some interesting ideas that wouldn't normally be explored. This next writer explores an idea that many of us have explored before. And that's the idea of religion, God, and what happens to us after we're gone. However, he does so in a way that we can appreciate. He starts off by letting us know what he's wondering about and then takes that train of thought and runs with it. He's writing from a Texas State Prison in Huntsville, Texas, and we 'wonder' when we'll hear from him again.***

I Wonder...

I wonder what the word is
Why the word is
Where the word is
Maybe it's all an illusion
No place to go except confusion
They say reality is what you make it
I wonder if you can buy it in a kit
I've read we're made in HIS image
Does this mean we're merely a mirage?
I wonder what it means to die
Do we return to the white of HIS eye?
Or is it all just a fantasy and unreal
I wonder if we really know how to feel
Do the answers all lie within the mind of HIM
Are we meant to question
Or to obey like a dog
I wonder if HE ever gets mad at me
Or maybe he just wants me
To open my eyes and see
I can think about what my heart feels
Or I can fell what my mind steals
I can even force my body to reveal
But does it mean anything
Or something
Or even everything
Or does it only mean nothing
I think that since I can say
Here I am
That means of the word and HIM
I understand
I feel that only HE is above me
And that means I only simply
Have to be
I know this is the secret key
In HIS eternity
And I praise and thank the one above
For placing me within
The shadows of a dove.

Omnium

Impacts from the fall of memory bring,
Retractions thru the tongue of flames sting.
Twinkles of the downward drift of cherub form,
Foundations under the edge of the storm.
Ripples in the water will flow over onward
Caused by the primal thrust of the first steward.
And the light is prowling across the upper heavens
While the blight under the bottom or our mind lengthens...
As we come to the ending of the fourth spectacle
The visions have sealed the last segments of circle
As the moisture of flame turns into energy
The multitude above reveals the mystery
As all the points align into the convergence
Our thoughts attempt the wrath of mergence.
Realized within the convolution of actualization,
We've braved the sensation of earth's meaning.
Simplified by constraints of absolute complication,
We've eased through temptations brutal shredding.
Knowing the reasons were pure for obedience
We've come to the crystal gates of transcendence
Maximum in the medium of omnium...
Standing the mentors lost within vengeance,
We've screamed to the guardian our just acceptance.
Mortified through given conclusion of realization,
We've found the essence denied since beginning
Edified through visions and the agony of crucifixion
We've killed the entity which causes man's ending
As we belong so we come to present ourselves
The place of will is there behind our shelves.

Never give up, never give in, And don't allow the prison systems to win

D. MILLER ***This is a real life depiction of what it means to be locked up. Many observations and self-reflections as it pertains to the rest of our environments. Being around the same thing day in and day out can get a person to really analyze other people's characteristics and sometimes we don't like what's revealed. This next writer, though we had to edit 'that' phrase, is speaking straight from the heart to one he's got love for. And in doing so, he speaks straight from the heart and holds nothing back as to what he's seen so far. He's empathizing with his friend and that takes an intelligent heart. He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA. We enjoyed this piece and we know you will too.***

Locked Up

Locked up in a cage,
Filled with anger, so much rage,
Is this what life's all about, I hear cat's on the tier, telling stories.
All about they're past glories.
Mackin' on the sexy ladies,
That ended up having their babies,
But now those same cat's locked up in a cell.
Thinking about the reality and hell, as they dwell.
Saying oh well.
I rolled the dice now I pay the price,
As the gangster as the thug.
That had to make some money,
Robbing fools and selling drugs
But was this the better way?
This is what cat's think about everyday.
They wake up in their cell, but oh well, what the hell.
Do what you got to do to survive.
It's only you that has one life to live.
Never give up, never give in,
And don't allow the prison systems to win,
Or keep you down.
Strive for a better way, and a brighter day.
Educate yourself.
Empower your self on how to be more productive with your life,
So hopefully one day when you hit the gates
You can finally do things right.
Change the way of how society and these corrupt and crooked cops label. Our gente. Stand strong, be firm!
But don't forget to learn from your mistakes,
Yeah life is full of games
But you must learn to be the best player to accomplish your goals!
You must be willing to remain dedicated
Devoted and determined.
In everything you choose to do, be smart.
Don't end up as society's little fool!
Strength. Honor. It's all you got!

JETT **Not pulling any punches and giving prime time examples from his own life, this next writer gets at the youngsters as real as possible. He isn't preaching saying, "You should do this, or you should do that." He's saying that sure getting money is a good goal to have because you can't do anything without money nowadays, but the ways in which we get it maybe need to be reconsidered. He says he's been on both sides of the fence, as many of us have, where we're doing illegal things to get money while holding down something legit that also butters our bread. You can tell from his writing that he's reaching out to the youth as if to say, "I'm not telling you what to do, it's just I've lived a certain life and learned from the bad choices I've made. Here's a prescription for how you can do something different." He's very wise and that jumps out at you from the page. He's also a motivation for us to stop playing ourselves, chasing dreams of fast everything, challenging us to slow down and think long term. Because though we won't be in this life forever, there are ways in which we can preserve ourselves so as not to just be another forgotten soldier of the streets. He's writing from the Main Adult Detention Facility in Santa Rosa, CA.**

I've been dealin' with this system since 1993 and they (the system) can always strong-arm you physically. But when you hit them with knowledge they are caught off guard.

Cheers, To A Better Tomorrow Because Of You

I grew up in the streets of San Francisco and Oakland. So when I here y'all (young Beat writers) talk, its mostly about money, power, respect. I get it, fo' sure, that is where you comin' from. That's somethin' O.G. and I think everybody wants at some point in there life. But it's all on how you obtain it, yadada? It's hard for people to look from the outside in or vice versa. But I been on both sides of the fence, dealin' wit' the street standards and society's standards. Their ideas are the same far as what people want (money, power, respect). But the standards to obtain them are totally different.

Street standards are easy, fun and appealin' to the eye. Society standards are looked at as hard, square like and not hood. This is the viewpoint of someone comin' from the inner-city, who's done the game and who's done the legit job. My so-called ninjas would get on me about having a legit job. But three of my patnas that I know for dummy long and my brah, brah was happy for ya' boy. Haters and us as people carin' what they say makes it hard for us to make that transition to be legit.

I'm not goin' to lie at one point I was doin' both and the money was good. But I got effed in the end. So then, I realized you can't half step it in this world. So I came to jail and the whole purpose of jail is to try to rehabilitate you. That's why you sit in a box for hours and hours. Some change and some remain the same. Even though I love my family I was around my ninjas all day. I did dirt with my ninjas and I remember the good and the bad times and I made it wit my ninjas by my side. So yes what they said mattered to me a lot. So, what I'm sayin' is they might of looked at me different or thank I went soft if I would of changed up. So it not that a person is scared of change, it's reasons like this that made it hard to change.

To make matters worse we (cats that stay in the street) have this picture in our head that when somebody gets locked up they come out crazier and harder then before. Because they survived bein' locked up with crazier and harder people than them. So, if you want to change you can't care or let it get to you what other people (haters) say and think. You liven for you and if you want something different in your life, your ninjas if they real going to respect it because it's YOUR CHOICE, ya dig?

My grandpa told me a story one time. He was goin' to ride out wit' his ninjas to a function one night and his mom shut him down. He could of sneaked out but he said F it and just chilled wit' his girl and his bra. Two of his potnas got killed that night and it could have been him. And that means I wouldn't be here. So we all have choices and he decided to go on that solo note. But he was still cool wit' his folks. So what I'm sayin' is find that motivation. It ain't got to be big. My grandfather's was just respected what his momma said. I'm not sayin' change is easy, some people never got it. But the key is when you do and you fall, you got to get back up no matter what or how long it takes you. Its like takin' a loss in the game, you got to find a way to bounce back and be on top. Always remember leaders are great and followers are stupid and always playin' catch up.

I was at Oakland Tech a few years back when we had the walkout and teachers was getting' fired and we go to class with no teacher to teach. So at that point school was a privilege and yes I cut class. But it wasn't no class. So I did what I did when I didn't have nobody at home to help me back in elementary school. I learned the Malcolm X way, I made myself pick up the books and just read. I read everything I put my hands on and if I didn't know a word, I'd write it down and look it up myself later. I hated talkin' to people with big vocabulary and I'd be like a... what that mean? LOL.

Even though the format of my penmanship isn't formal, I still can write an impressive letter to the president of the U.S. if I wanted to. When I speak about accomplishments that is exactly what it is. That means at one point I couldn't do it. Yes, I still use the dictionary and I'm not the smartest in the world, but you can be, don't be like me, be better then me. We are not born knowin' how to do nothin'. Somebody had to teach us to talk and walk. So there's nothing you can't do, if you really want to learn. It's all in your hands.

Back to the subject. The legit way aka society's way, you can only be better at it then a lot of people, because if you have street smarts with book knowledge and got a mouth piece, you are unstoppable. That will bring more money, power and respect then ya' could thank of. I've been dealin' with this system since 1993 and they (the system) can always strong-arm you physically. But when you hit them with knowledge they are caught off guard. They don't what to do and they always ask, how do you know that? All the books are the same. What they go by and read. You can read too. Police get a lot of people because they don't know the right (the amendment) or the state laws. Its sad but a lot of schools don't teach it. Did you know spittin' on the sidewalk at certain places is 135.00 fine? I know I got one. Lol. But if you cant do the 9 to 5 there are legit come ups. You can sell art, poems, C.D. mixes, it's all on you and what you come up with. But those are just examples. And when The Beat says something and it feels like they putting you down, they just want you to thank and look at things from a different point of view.

We can try to justify things but we all know right from wrong. We just don't want to hear that shhh sometimes. That's real. Take it how you want to. But peep this, statistics say the majority of average minorities will have gone to jail once, be shot or killed by the age of 25. Ain't that 'bout a B? But it's on us to change that because the government is making little to no effort to, dudu dig? I ain't sayin' be no punk because I will never. But some stuff could be avoided. Like if big brah wasn't always on the block he would be here and some of my potnas was not boys. But now they gone.

My cousin was murdered last year at sixteen years old, ya know. Jail getting more like the pen everyday. Got yo' boy on twenty-three-and-a-half-hours lock down and I got two felonies at nineteen. And don't forget I'm havin' two babies, by two different baby mamas and look at eighte years with eighty-five. But you can be different, the power's in your hands. Trust and believe in yourself then others will. Aright!!! Until the next time pencil touch paper.

My Photographic Memory

There can't be a more gripping title written by me in
clichéd shorthand as I continue to zoom skyward
And as I click my memory forward
Never stepping backward this ex g will take whatever
steps necessary when it comes to time to tell youngsters
what better is
Without this
So hold that snake hiss.
It's very difficult,
Because some people are not quite sure what they are
doing wrong
Even if they believe it's the right all along
Like a sad song, forgetting it all smoking on a bong
In the harshest light of my photographic memory
I can visualize cry for cry
The homies Hi and Bye — the lie
It's time to examine why
So many people hate warriors over the last decade
Because they kill without remorse including their own
people
They system is going to fade!
This leads to this conclusion: my photographic memory
can conduct and assessment of this political stir of
homeboy's blood pouring out like a broken faucet
Some strong lost it
Dead
My photographic memory painted red
Some hate on me for coming on the scene and changing
the game and making people look at both sides of the
gang issue
Bullets may not miss you
I don't have any good memories, I can't think of any
I don't have a perfect brainiac slot
Only equal voice to youngsters banging whom
mainstream ignores hating in scores
My photographic memory is of violence and gangsters
holding guns and knives
Homies lying in caskets
Can you really hear me like they say you can?
Do they really know man?
Did you ask for forgiveness for your sin?
So you can enter his kingdom and have peace within?
To say the least
Another bad photographic moment of Satan the beast!

ALEX SHELTON

This next writer is a powerhouse for The Beat Within, for not only is he one of our more consistent writers but he's also one with brilliant ideas. He always challenges those youngsters in gangs to recognize their thinking and if they want to be doing that for the rest of their lives. "Spectacular Ideas," is sort of plays on how we think we have these spectacular ideas, but sometimes the results of those ideas show that they really weren't all that spectacular. Then he concludes with a very insightful piece that demonstrates first hand what gang-banging has done for him. And from what we read, it didn't do too much. He's writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA.

Spectacular Ideas

Keep it arms length
My idea of an ex 'G' strength
I ain't no genius
I ain't no wizard
Comparing myself with Einstein
Is like comparing a tsunami to a blizzard
Good ideas, new ideas
Old ideas, spectacular ideas
Where do I get these ideas?
Is a gangster idea absorbed into your head
Who said
Swimming to surface diving wildly
Bickering shark-like with unplayful chemistry-killing
madly
Feeding on ideas in the prison place
Any place
Leading to an evil dark narrow stair case
With the speed of a 70 mph cheetah chase!
Always something important to say on the pages of my
poem binder
The legacy of those gangsters affect who have gone
Before us in time is an ever-present reason to switch our
"Spectacular ideas"
To cool ideas
Why do I have these ideas?
Can my ideas get anymore kinder
It's so simple to know that a broken-down car needs fixing
Step 1 start with a lil' idea or big idea
The grass may wither, and the flower may fade
But the word of our God stands forever
And ever
As I have a perfect idea to write from the word:
"Avoid any affiliation that would compromise our purpose
or weaken our effectiveness"

-Corinthians

Shamed, the mirror is a terrible place
Guilty can't bear to see my own face.

SOUNTHONE KATEKEO

A lot of times we go through messed up places like jail and actually learn something. Usually not because of jail but in spite of jail. We're tired of being in that situation so we do everything in our power to keep ourselves out of that situation, or at least some of us do this. And whether you're changing because you have a baby on the way, or because you've found God in your life, or even because someone close to you has died. As long as change is happening - it's all good. He's writing from the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA.

The Change

Alone, yet surrounded by men
Shut-out, struggle to fit in
Exhausted, sleep it never comes
Trapped, nowhere to run

This trouble I've created
Will be the death of me.

Scared, danger at every turn
Angry, like fire my insides burn
Shamed, the mirror is a terrible place
Guilty can't bear to see my own face.

This trouble I've created
What'll be its see?

Sincerity, I long to truly change
Mercy, who can free me from these chains?
Grace, freely it does come
Jesus, he's the only one.

This trouble I've created
Only he can take away

How to live like him learning
Running, this race with him I'll win
Praying, he hear my every word
Scaring my soul is like a bird.

This trouble I've created
Has brought about some good
I'm finally just now living
The way I've always should.

All this gang BS it has died over the years. Gangs are just a front for people that are scared to face life alone, it's for one who needs help to carry on with life or they just want to feel 'a part' of something.

check out the rest of Chris Grajeda's BWO piece on page 44